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Magazine

BEYOND MANDALAY

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By

GEORGE E. POWERS

SECOND APRIL
NUMBER
MARCH 15, 1929



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TOP - NOTCH

TWICE-A-MONTH

Vol. LXXVII

MAGAZINE

Number 4

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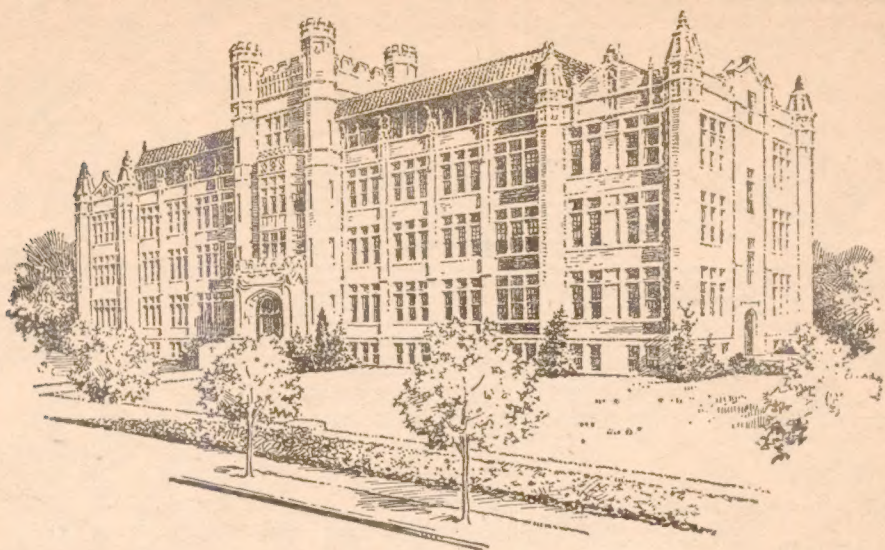
Twice-a-month publication issued by Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Jr., Vice President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary. Copyright, 1929, by Street & Smith Corporation, New York. Copyright, 1929, by Street & Smith Corporation, Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, January 8, 1915, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Canadian Subscription, \$3.70. Foreign, \$4.40. This issue dated April 15, 1929.

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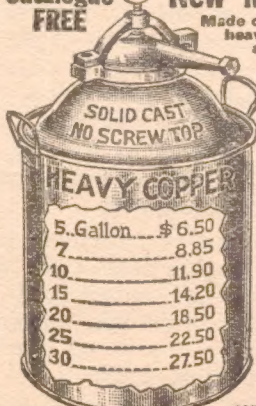
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This offer is time-tested—it can without exaggeration go on record as a *Guarantee*. Back of it stands a thoroughly responsible company—a recognized manufacturer in the direct-to-wearer field—a financially dominant leader. You can repose full confidence in this organization and the proposition it makes you.

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DAILY
WEEKLY
MONTHLY
YEARLY

INCREASED INCOME
NO SLACK SEASON
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CLUES

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Absolutely everyone who takes full advantage of this opportunity will be rewarded. But, hurry,—**find the "ONE" key** that is different from all the others and **RUSH THE NUMBER OF IT** and your name and address to me **TODAY** on a postal card or in a letter. And, just say:—"Key number _____ is different from all the others. Please tell me how I can get this magnificent Chrysler '75' Royal Sedan—or—\$3,000.00 **CASH MONEY** without obligation or one penny of cost to me."

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Name

Address

City State

Age Occupation



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"Before taking the N. S. T. A. Course, I was making \$200 a month, but could see no future. Last week my earnings amounted to over \$1000." O. D. Oliver, Norman, Okla.

Who Else Wants to Raise Their Pay 700% or More?

Can It Be An Accident When Man After Man Raises His Pay—Each One Taking The Same Identical Steps? If You Are One Who Aspires to Earn REAL Money—If You Want To Get Out Of A Monotonous, Low-Pay Job, Find Out About This Tested Plan For Increasing Incomes. It Has Raised More Salaries Than All The "Pull" And Luck In The World!

Get a Copy of This Amazing Book Free

LET'S be practical. You want to make more money. . . . A few years ago the three men pictured above were in the same situation. They had the urge to increase their pay—but didn't know how to do it.

Take Mark Barichievich of San Francisco as a typical example. Not long ago he was working in a restaurant, struggling along on a salary that was actually as low as \$8 a week! Naturally he was keenly dissatisfied—but like so many other men caught in blind-alley jobs, he could see no way out.

And then something happened! A certain book fell into his hands. Between its covers he discovered certain facts and secrets he had never dreamed of! Within a short time his pay jumped to \$50 a week. And to-day he makes as high as \$125!

Remarkable Salary Increase

A lucky accident? Not a bit of it! OTHER men who have increased their salaries after reading these vital facts are numbered in the thousands! For example, C. W. Birmingham of Ohio read it and

his salary raised from \$15 a week to \$7,500 a year. . . . Wm. Shore of California made \$3,000 his first 5 months . . . and C. V. Champion of Illinois became president of his company at over \$10,000 a year!

Your Income Multiplied or You Pay Nothing

N. S. T. A. is now offering, to every man who wants to increase his income, an amazing Double Money-Back bond that assures you a definite stipulated addition to your income, within three months after your training is completed—or the course costs you nothing. This daring offer is possible only because of the success of thousands of members. Send coupon immediately for full details.

The Secret of Big Pay

How did they do it? What did the books show them? Just this:—Every one of these men realized that Salesmanship offers BIGGER rewards and delivers them QUICKER than any other line of work under the sun. This vital book "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" revealed to them the real TRUTH about the art of selling. It blasted dozens of old theories and told them exactly how the great sales records of nationally-known star salesmen have been achieved. And not only that, it outlined a

simple plan that will enable almost any man to master scientific salesmanship without losing a day or dollar from his present position.

A Few Weeks—Then Bigger Pay

There was nothing "different" about these men when they started. Salesmanship is just like any other profession. It has certain fundamental rules and laws—that you can master just as easily as you learned the alphabet. And through the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION METHOD—an exclusive feature of the N. S. T. A. system of SALESMANSHIP training—you can acquire

the equivalent of actual experience while studying.

Free to Every Man

If we were asking several dollars a copy for "The Secrets of Modern Dynamic Salesmanship" you might hesitate. But it is now FREE. So get your copy now. Learn the real facts about the selling profession, and about the tremendous demand for trained salesmen in every line, to fill city and traveling positions paying up to \$5,000 and \$10,000 a year. (Last year this association received calls for over 50,000 N. S. T. A. members from Wholesalers, Manufacturers and Jobbers.) A copy is yours for the asking. And your request entails no obligation. Simply fill out and mail the coupon above. Do it now!

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION

Dept. 581-C, N. S. T. A. Bldg., CHICAGO, ILL.

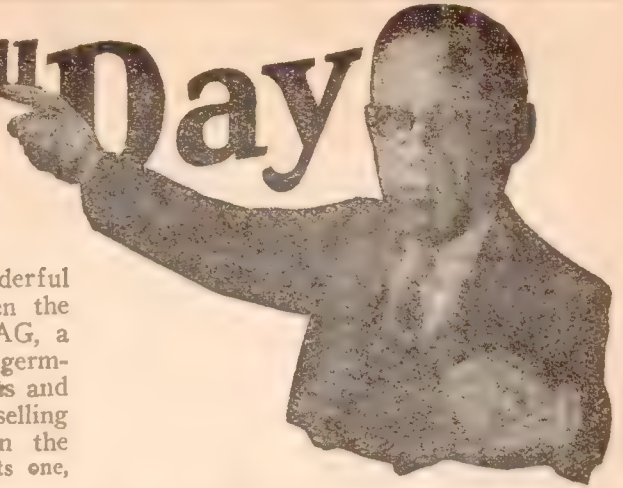


Now Free

MAIL COUPON ABOVE

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

I Offer You \$15 a Day



Make \$15 a day selling this wonderful new household article that has taken the country by storm. It is CED-O-BAG, a moth-proof, damp-proof, dust-proof, germ-proof storage bag for clothes, blankets and furs. It is the greatest, fastest selling household article that has come on the market for years. Every housewife wants one, buys on sight.

CED-O-BAGS are made from rubberized fabric which has been chemically treated. They are patented. Nothing else like them. Instead of a small, easily torn paper bag or a clumsy, expensive cedar chest, a CED-O-BAG provides adequate space for two to four garments. And yet, with all of these distinctive advantages, CED-O-BAGS are priced for quick sale.

Ced-O-Bags Offer Big Profits

There is a chance for you to clean up a lot of money in your town at once just by taking orders for CED-O-BAGS. L. H. Green went out and made a clear profit of \$12 in one afternoon. J. V. Davis took five orders in one evening and was \$5 richer. Edith Phillips made \$53 in one week's spare time (evenings). You can do as well or better.



No Experience Needed

You don't need experience or training. Every home in your town is a live prospect. All you have to do is show the housewife a CED-O-BAG and take her order. We deliver and collect. You

get your profits at once, and move on to the next house and take another order. Everyone buys. George Jones took 22 orders in two days' spare time and had a clear profit of \$22. Twenty-one agents report an average profit of \$3 an hour.

How Much Money Do You Want?

Would you like to make an extra \$100 or \$200 a month, in your spare time? Would you like to gather a lump sum of \$500 or \$600 in a couple of months? If you would, here is your chance. Mail me the coupon and I will tell you all about this money-making proposition. I will show you how you can make \$15 a day or more in this easy, pleasant, engaging work. I will show you the way to quick profits—big profits. Mail the coupon now.

C. E. Comer, The Comer Mfg. Co.
Dept. 0-73 - - - - - Dayton, Ohio

Mail This Now

C. E. Comer, The Comer Mfg. Co.,
Dept. 0-73, Dayton, Ohio.

Dear Sir: Please send me full details of your money-making proposition by which I can make \$15 a day in cash. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name.....

Address.....

\$8000^{in 4 Months} as REAL ESTATE SPECIALIST!

That's what Anthony C. Maurell made after getting my free book. Knew nothing about real estate until he learned my successful system. Men and women—young and old are making big money my way. So can you.

FREE BOOK Tells How

Start at home in spare time. Build immensely profitable business of your own. No capital or experience needed. Send now for full details and positive proof of amazing money-making success. Address President

American Business Builders, Inc., Dept. C-22, 18 East 18 St., New York



STOP TOBACCO

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have. Make yourself free and happy with Tobacco Redeemer. Not a substitute, not habit forming. Write for free booklet telling of the deadly effect of tobacco and the positive, easy way to remove all craving in a few days.

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Dept. 892, Clayton Mo.

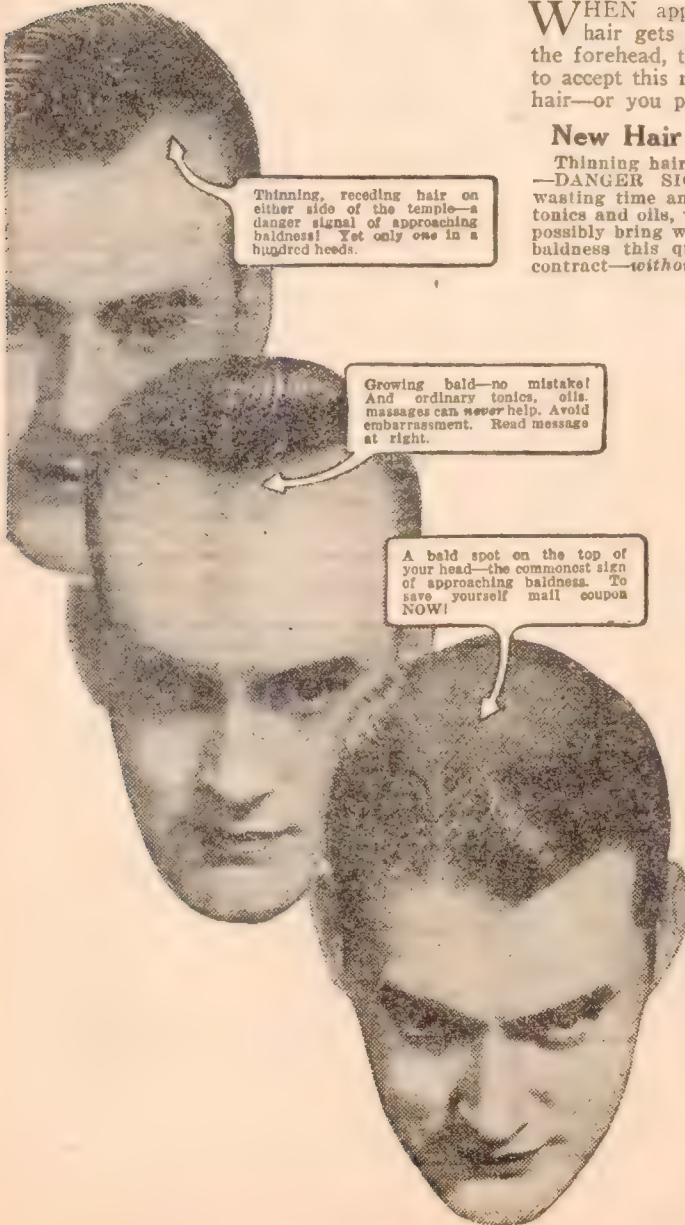
FREE BOOK

WEAK, NERVOUS WOMEN

Rundown, miserable? If you suffer ovarian or bearing down pains, female troubles, irregular or painful periods, write Mrs. Ellen Lowell, social worker, 329 Mass., Kansas City, Mo., for a convenient home method whereby she and many others state they regained healthy, happy womanhood. This advice is free; she has nothing to sell.

Where do YOU want to Grow New Hair?

Decide NOW! Let me cover that spot with new hair in 30 days, or I'll mail you a check—I'll be the LOSER, not you!



Thinning, receding hair on either side of the temple—a danger signal of approaching baldness! Yet only one in a hundred heads.

Growing bald—no mistake! And ordinary tonics, oils, massages can never help. Avoid embarrassment. Read message at right.

A bald spot on the top of your head—the commonest sign of approaching baldness. To save yourself mail coupon NOW!

WHEN approaching baldness threatens—when hair gets thinner and thinner on the temples, the forehead, the top of your head—that's the time to accept this no risk offer. I positively grow new hair—or you pay NOTHING!

New Hair in 30 Days—Or No Cost!

Thinning hair, falling hair, dandruff, dry scaly scalp—DANGER SIGNALS ALL! Stop delaying. Stop wasting time and money on ordinary salves, massages, tonics and oils, which you know from experience cannot possibly bring worth-while results! Save yourself from baldness this quick, easy way—through my iron-clad contract—without risk! For I GUARANTEE to end dandruff—stop falling hair—grow new healthy hair in 30 days—or I don't want a penny of your money!

Why does baldness begin to appear? Why do ordinary tonics fail to help? In most cases of baldness the hair roots are dormant—sleeping through lack of nourishment. And tonics fail to help simply because they treat only the surface skin. To make a tree grow you don't rub "growing fluid" on the bark. You get to the roots. That's the simple secret of my scientific treatment. It goes beneath the surface—nourishes dormant roots directly—stimulates them to new activity—encourages quick and healthy growth of new, vigorous hair.

At the Merke Institute, 5th Avenue, New York, many people have paid as high as \$100 for results secured. Now you can secure equally beneficial results at home for only a few cents a day—AT MY RISK. You grow new hair where you need new hair—or I pay, not you!

Coupon Brings FREE BOOK Explaining Treatment Fully!

Some cases of baldness are hopeless. I admit it. But so many thousands have benefited through my remarkable treatment that the facts are certainly worth knowing. Mail coupon for vitally interesting FREE booklet, giving the complete story—and, in addition, telling all about my iron-clad contract, which enables you to take the treatment without a penny's risk. No obligation. Sign and mail the coupon NOW! Allied Merke Institutes, Inc., Dept. 423, 512 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Allied Merke Institutes, Inc.,

Dept. 423, 512 Fifth Ave., New York City.

Please send me—without cost or obligation—in plain wrapper, a copy of your book, "The New Way to Grow Hair," describing the Merke System.

Name.....
(State whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss)

Address.....

City.....State.....

(My age is.....)

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Jack and
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Just copy
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That may tell me what
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you would be. If you are 16 years old or
older and will mail me your sketch at once,
I will send you free and prepaid a Drafts-
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These Money-Making
Tools Furnished
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Plan • Successful Draftsmanship**

Write to me. I will send you my new book. Not a catalog. My Pay-Raising
Plan and money making advice. I can prove that men trained by me make
\$3,000 to \$9,000 per year. A. H. Bernier makes \$7,000 to \$9,000 a year.
In addition to sending you at once, free, my Pay-Raising Plan, I show you
above the line imported drafting instruments you get as soon as you become
my student. You get also 14 other drafting tools and a drafting table,
included in my course. I train you right for big pay jobs.

Employment Service

After training you I help you get a
job without charging you a cent for
this service. Employers come to me
for men.

Earn While You Learn

I give you special work and tell you
how to make money. You can start
making extra money soon after be-
ginning my training.



I train you
at home!

Age or Lack of Educa- tion No Draw Back

No experience nor high school edu-
cation necessary. My practical home
study course is so simple, your
spare time is all that is necessary.

Satisfaction or Money Back

If my training does not satisfy you
after you have finished, you get
every penny back.

If you earn less than

\$70 a Week

Write to Me

for My Pay-Raising Plan

Send sketch and get free Rule

ENGINEER DOBE

1951 Lawrence Ave. Div. 14-03 Chicago
Here is sketch. Send free Pocket Rule, "Successful Drafts-
manship" and "My Pay-Raising Plan" also plan to earn money
while learning and proof of big money paying positions.

Name.....Age.....

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\$351⁰⁰ CLEARED ~ IN ONE DAY

So writes W. H. Adams of Ohio. Letter from Cali-
fornia man reports \$11275 sales in three months;
New Jersey \$4000 profits in two months; Pa. \$3000

profits in four months. Ira Shook \$365
sales in one day. Bram bought one outfit
April 5 and 7 more by August. Iwata
bought one outfit and 10 more within a year.
J. R. Bert says "only thing I ever bought
that equaled advertisement." John Culp
says: "Everything go-
ing lovely. Crispette
wrappers all over



town. It's a
good old world after
all." Kellogg, \$700
ahead end of 2d week.
Wholesale or retail.
Big profits either way.
No town too small.
Business is pleasant,
fascinating and dig-
nified. You manu-
facture a food
product.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS

Furnish secret formulas, raw material and equipment. Little
capital required; no experience needed.

BUILD A BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN

No limit to the sale of Crispettes. Everybody likes them. It's
a delicious food confection. Write for facts about a business
that will make you independent. Start now, in your own town.

PROFITS \$1000 MONTH EASILY POSSIBLE

Send coupon at once for illustrated book of facts. It
contains many enthusiastic letters from others
—shows their places of business, tells
how and when to start, and all
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EAKINS CO.
340 High Street
Springfield, Ohio

Please send Book of Facts at once.

Name.....

Address.....

450 Miles on a Gallon of Gas!

According to a recent article by the
president of the world's largest motor
research corporation, there is enough
energy in a gallon of gasoline if con-
verted 100% in mechanical energy to
run a four cylinder car 450 miles.

**NEW GAS SAVING
INVENTION ASTONISHES
CAR OWNERS**

A marvelous device, already installed
on thousands of cars, has accom-
plished wonders in utilizing a portion
of this waste energy and is producing
mileage tests that seem unbelievable.
Not only does it save gasoline
but it also creates more power, gives
instant starting, quick pick-up, and



eliminates carbon.

FREE SAMPLE and \$100 a Week

To obtain national distribution quickly, men are being
appointed everywhere to help supply the tremendous de-
mand. Free samples furnished to workers. Write today
to E. Oliver, Pres., for this free sample and big money
making offer.

WHIRLWIND MFG. CO.

999-897 Third St. Milwaukee, Wisc.

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I'll Pay Your Bills



and give you a steady income for the rest of your life if you will take care of my business in your locality. No experience needed. Pleasant easy work can be handled in spare or full time.

No Investment Needed

I furnish all capital—I set you up in business, advertise you, and do everything to make you my successful and respected partner in your locality. Partner may be either man or woman.

All I ask is that you have ambition and can devote a few hours each day to distributing my famous products to friends and a list of established customers. High grade food products, teas, coffees, spices, extracts, things people must have to live.

Your Groceries at Wholesale

As my partner I furnish your groceries at wholesale. Big FREE supply contains over 32 full size packages of highest quality products. Quality backed by \$25,000.00 bond.

Iron-Clad Guarantee to YOU of \$15 a DAY Steady Income

I don't want you to take any chances. I guarantee your income. Send coupon at once for my signed guarantee of \$100.00 a week for full time or \$3.50 per hour for spare time work. I go 50-50 with my partners and give valuable premiums.

I Furnish You Chrysler Coach



This is part of my FREE outfit to you. Chrysler closed car to use in our business—it is yours to keep—no contest.

C. W. VAN DE MARK, Pres. & Gen. Mgr.
Health-O Quality Products Co.

Dept. 1093-CC

Health-O Bldg.

CINCINNATI, OHIO.

C. 1929 by C. W. V. D. M.

Easy for you to make big money I look out for welfare of my partners \$42.13 in Six Hours

Jack Foster reports \$42.13 in six hours; Ruth Haufman with no previous experience made \$101.25 her first week. A. Pelletier earned \$117.50 the first five days. Hundreds of other partners doing as well.



FREE FOOD PRODUCTS COUPON

C. W.
Van de Mark
Health-O Quality
Products Co.,
Dept. 1093-CC
Health-O Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

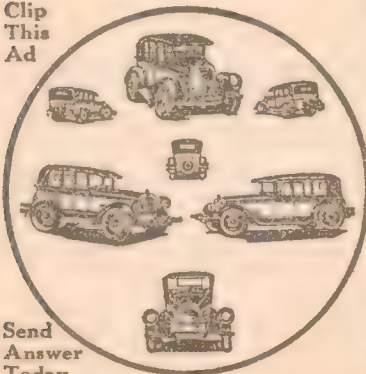
Without obligation on my part, send at once, application for territory and details of partnership offer, free food products.

Name

Address

City State

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Ad



Win Nash Sedan Or \$2,750.00 in Cash

Someone who answers this ad will receive, absolutely free, a fully equipped 7-Passenger, Advanced Six Nash Sedan, or its full value in cash (\$2,000.00). We are also giving away a Dodge Sedan, a Brunswick Phonograph and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash. This offer is open to anyone living in the U. S. A. outside of Chicago.

Solve This Puzzle

There are 7 cars in the circle. By drawing 3 straight lines you can put each one in a space by itself. When you do this send me your answer right away.

\$750.00 Extra for Promptness

In addition to the many valuable prizes and Hundreds of Dollars in Cash, we are also giving a Special Prize of \$750.00 in Cash for Promptness. First prize winner will receive \$2,750.00 in cash, or the Nash Sedan and \$750.00 in cash. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded each one tying. Solve the puzzle right away and send me your answer together with your name and address plainly written. \$4,500.00 in prizes—EVERYBODY REWARDED.

John T. Adams, Mgr.

Dept. 1423

323 S. Peoria St., Chicago, Ill.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

See the World FREE!



Taste Romance and Adventure In the Far Lands of the Earth.

How often you've longed to see for yourself the awe of Egypt's pyramids—the beauties of the gorgeous Mediterranean sunset—the squalor of China's ancient cities!

Spend a few years, or the rest of your life, tasting high adventure on the seven seas and in all the world's great ports—roving the earth's highways and byways! You can do it FREE—all your expenses paid—and earn a good salary besides!

Only one profession will carry you around the world at will, traveling like a gentleman, but that's the most interesting and pleasant work there is—Radio Operating! Easily and quickly learned, there's no other profession like it for the man who wants the experiences and pleasures of world-travel. Radio operators are needed—all sea-going ships like the one shown here must carry from one to half a dozen or more.



Take a Look Beyond the Skyline Without a Penny's Expense

Radio operators aboard ocean liners live luxuriously—they rank as officers of the ship. Meals, a private cabin, all other living needs are furnished free, and besides the operator draws a good salary. You can learn quickly and easily at home in your spare time to be a Radio operator through our practical training methods. Take a look at the FREE BOOK which tells how—mail coupon below.

This U. S. Government-recognized school has been training successful operators since 1914. Our graduates are all over the world. We maintain an Employment Department to put you on your own ship. The famous NACOMETTE, a patented home code teacher given our students is recognized as the best and easiest way to learn the Radio code at home. A few short months, with the aid of the famous Nacometer and our quick home training, and you too can be a fully qualified Radio operator, sitting in your cabin like the one shown above, bound out for Liverpool or Nagasaki!

Read the Free Book that tells all about this fascinating profession and our practical Government-recognized methods of training you for it. Send coupon TODAY—no obligation. Special tuition offer now on, includes the Nacometer, famous code teaching machine. Find out what Radio offers you. Act at once.

NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE
WASHINGTON, D. C.

SPECIAL OFFER COUPON

National Radio Institute,
Dept. 9-PX, Washington, D. C.

Gentlemen: Without obligating me in any way send me your free book and information about your Nacometer, the Home Code teaching machine given with your course.

Name.....

Address.....

Test your Ability to DRAW

You may have artistic ability that when properly trained, would insure your success as a commercial artist. Send for our Art Ability Questionnaire which tests your natural sense of design, proportion, color, perspective, etc. Learn if your talent is worth developing. Your Questionnaire will be graded by Federal instructors, and you will be frankly told what your score is.

Federal Students Make Good Incomes

This fascinating free test has been an eye opener to many Federal School students—girls as well as men—who are making \$2000, \$4000, \$5000 and \$8000 yearly. Learn at home in spare time. The Federal Course contains lessons by leading artists, gives you *personal criticism*, and leads rapidly to practical work. By all means get this free test—send now for your Questionnaire. State age and occupation.



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LaSalle Extension University, Dept 365-R, Chicago



EARLE LIEDERMAN—The Muscle Builder
 Author of "Muscle Building," "Science of Wrestling,"
 "Secrets of Strength," "Here's Health," "Endurance," Etc.

What Do Women Want Most?

Women want he-men for their husbands and sweethearts. None of this chorus-man stuff for the real girl. She wants to be proud of his physical make-up; proud of his figure in a bathing suit. She knows that it's the fellow that is full of pep and vitality that gets ahead in this world. He's got the physical backbone to back-up the mental decisions he makes. He'll win out every time.

Look Yourself Over!

How do you shape up? Are you giving yourself a square deal? Have you got those big rolling muscles that mean health and strength inside and out? The vitality that gives you the ambition to win out at everything you start? Make that girl admire you first and foremost for a real he-man, and the hardest part in winning her is over.

I Can Give It to You in 30 Days

In 30 days I can do you over so that she will hardly know you. I'll put a whole inch of solid muscle on each arm in 30 days, and two whole inches of rippling strength across your chest. I've done it for over a hundred thousand others, and I can do it for you. I don't care how weak and puny you are. I like to get them weak and puny, because it's the hopeless case that I work with best. It gives me a lot of real joy just to see them develop and the surprised look in their eyes when they step before the mirror at the end of 30 days and see what a miracle I have worked for them.

You'll Be a He-Man from Now On!

And it's no temporary layer of muscle I put on you. It's there to stay! With those newly broadened shoulders; that perfect neck and great manly chest, you can maintain your self-respect in any society. Every woman will know that you are what every man should be—a forceful red-blooded he-man.

I Want You for 90 Days

If at the end of 30 days you think you have improved, wait till you see yourself at the end of 90 days. Then the friends you thought were strong will seem like children by comparison. I'm not called the Muscle Builder for nothing. My system scientifically builds real muscle faster than you ever imagined.

Watch Them Turn Around

Notice how every woman prefers the fellow who carries himself with head up. Notice how the broad-shouldered man always gets their eye. They want a dependable he-man when they make their choice—one who can protect them. And you can be that man.

Send for My New 64 Page Book

"Muscular Development"—It Is Free

And it's the peppiest piece of reading you ever laid your eyes on. And there's 48 full-page photos of myself and some of my prize-winning pupils. This is the finest art gallery of strong men ever assembled. Look them over. If you don't get a kick out of this book, you had better roll over—you're dead. Come on, then. Take out the old pen or pencil and sign your name and address to the coupon. If you haven't a stamp, a postal will do. But snap into it. Do it now.

EARLE LIEDERMAN, Dept. 3003, 305 Broadway, New York City
Earle Liederman, Dept. 3003, 305 Broadway, New York City

Dear Sir: Please send me, absolutely FREE and without any obligation on my part whatever, a copy of your latest book, "Muscular Development."

Name.....Age.....
 Street.....
 City.....State.....
 (Please write or print plainly)



Grocery Bills all Paid—and \$10 a Day besides

If you want plenty of money to pay all your grocery bills—and \$8 to \$10 in a day besides—just send me your name and I'll show you a new, easy way to get it. I'll give you the same chance I gave to Van Allen, of Illinois, who reports that he averages more than \$100 profit a week. You don't need any experience. G. Karnath, of Minnesota, writes, "Made \$20.35 the first 5 hours." Mrs. Hodges, of New York, says, "Never fail to make a profit of \$18 to \$20 a day." And right now I offer you the same opportunity I gave these people.

Big Profits for Easy Work

I am President of a million dollar Company. I distribute high-quality Groceries and other Household Necessities direct from factory to user through Authorized Local Representatives. Last year my customers bought fifteen million packages of my products. This put nearly two million dollars in the pockets of my Representatives. Now I invite you to share in these profits. I'll give you exclusive territory—help you make big money from the very start.

No Capital or Experience Needed

All you have to do is call on your friends and my established customers and take care of their orders. It is easy. I never sell to stores. You alone get the profit on all orders from your territory. YOU DON'T RISK A CENT. Keep your present job and start in spare time if you want to. You have everything to gain—not a penny to lose.

Don't send me any money—just mail the coupon. I'll send you my amazing new plan that offers plenty of money to pay all your grocery bills and \$8 to \$10 in a single day besides. And I will tell you how to get a newest model Ford Tudor Sedan without cost. Don't miss this opportunity. Mail coupon TODAY SURE.

MAIL THIS TODAY

Albert Mills, Pres., American Products Co.,
1203 Moamouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Tell me, without cost or obligation, about your wonderful new proposition that offers money to pay all my grocery bills and \$8 to \$10 in a day besides. Also explain your new Ford Offer.

Name.....
 Address.....

© A. P. Co. (Print or Write Plainly)

“What? Learn Music by Mail?” they laughed



“Yes,” I cried, “and I’ll bet money I can do it!”

ONE day after lunch the office crowd was in the recreation-room, smoking and talking, while I thumbed through a magazine.

“Why so quiet, Joe,” some one called to me. “Just reading an ad,” I replied, “about a new way to learn music by mail. Says here any one can learn to play in a few months at home, without a teacher. Sounds easy.”

“Ha, ha,” laughed Fred Lawrence, “do you suppose they would say it was hard?”

“Perhaps not,” I came back, a bit peevish, “but it sounds so reasonable I thought I’d write them for their booklet.”

Well, maybe I didn’t get a razzing then! Fred Lawrence sneered: “The poor fellow really believes he can learn music by mail!”

“Yes, and I’ll bet money I can do it!” I cried. But the crowd only laughed harder than ever.

During the few months that followed, Fred Lawrence never missed a chance to give me a sly dig about my bet. And the boys always got a good laugh, too. But I never said a word. I was waiting patiently for a chance to get the last laugh myself.

My Chance Arrives

Then came the office outbreak at Pine Grove. After lunch it rained, and we had to sit around inside. Suddenly some one spied a piano in the corner. Fred Lawrence saw a fine chance to have some fun at my expense.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he cried, “our friend Joe, the music-master, has consented to give us a recital.”

That gave the boys a good laugh. Some of them got on either side of me and with mock dignity started to escort me to the piano.

“Play ‘The Varsity Drag,’” shouted Fred, thinking to embarrass me further. I heard a girl say, “Oh, let the poor fellow alone; can’t you see he’s mortified to death?”

The Last Laugh

I smiled to myself. This was certainly a wonderful setting for my little surprise party. Assuming a scared look, I began fingering the keys, and then . . . with a wonderful feeling of cool confidence . . . I broke right into the very selection Fred asked for. There was a sudden hush in the room as I made that old piano talk. But in a few minutes a fellow jumped to his feet and shouted, “Believe me, the boy is there! Let’s dance!”

Tables and chairs were pushed aside, and soon the whole crowd was having a whale of a time. I played one peppy selection after another until I finished with “Crazy Rhythm” and the crowd stopped dancing and singing to applaud me. As I turned around to thank them, there was Fred holding a tenspot right under my nose.

“Folks,” he said, “I want to apologize to Joe. I bet him he couldn’t learn to play by mail, and believe me, he sure deserves to win the money!”

“Learn to play by mail!” exclaimed a dozen people. “That sounds impossible! Tell us how you did it!”

I was only too glad to tell them how I’d always wanted to play but couldn’t afford a teacher, and couldn’t think of spending years in practice. I described how I had read the U. S. School of Music ad, and how Fred bet me I couldn’t learn to play by mail.

“Folks,” I continued, “it was the biggest surprise of my life when I got the first

lesson. It was fun right from the start, everything as simple as A-B-C. There were no scales or tiresome exercises. And all it required was part of my spare time. In a short time I was playing jazz, classical pieces, and in fact, anything I wanted. Believe me, that certainly was a profitable bet I made with Fred.”

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TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE

Vol. LXXVII

Second April Number

No. 4



Beyond Mandalay

By George E. Powers

A COMPLETE NOVEL

CHAPTER I.

WOOD AGAINST BONE.

EACH gust of hot wind drifting up from the Irawadi seemed more oppressive to Cabel than the last one. Since early evening he had lain sweltering on the bungalow veranda, dividing the hours between trying to sleep and cursing the business that brought him to Burma right in the middle of the dry season.

Mandalay, farther down the river, was bad enough. But this far-flung

outpost, Myitkina, with its stifling dust, and its heavy heat waves from the jungle slopes across the river—"Bah! who could sleep in this infernal oven?" Cabel suddenly completed his thoughts aloud, got up and dressed.

Five minutes later he emerged from the court into the dusty, tree-arched road, bound for the river.

The way led past the inn. As Cabel drew within a few yards of the long veranda, at this late hour deserted, a figure lurched through the bar doors. Stumbling down the stairs the man went zigzagging up the road.

"Maybe he's heading for the river to cool off, too," Cabel laughed, watching the fellow vanish in the darkness. "I—now what the devil!" Cabel halted with a start as two men suddenly darted out from the shadows at the end of the veranda.

"Hm!" Cabel muttered, breaking into a fast walk when the pair passed from sight. "Looks like that drunk fellow's in for a frisking. Guess I'll take a hand in this, myself!"

A hundred yards he slipped along in the thick carpet of dust, then halted to listen. There was not a sound ahead, but the odor of dust in the air warned that he was not far behind the trailers.

Tiptoeing along now, Cabel halted every few steps to listen and try to make out objects in the blackness. Presently he could hear distinctly the *plop-plop* of the drunken man's feet floundering through the dust.

So Cabel slowed his pace to a mere crawl, blood a-tingle with anticipation of the conflict he was apt to plunge into any instant.

Yard after yard he crept on, however, with nothing happening.

Then, just as he was about to speed up and make known his presence, a thick voice broke the stillness: "Hey! leggo me! Whatcha try—hel—"

The cry for help was stifled abruptly. The thud of wood against bone echoed in the narrow, arched roadway. Cabel let out a shout and plunged forward.

The next thing he knew he had stumbled over a huddled body and pitched headlong. Coughing and choking, eyes filled with dust, Cabel scrambled up, brushing against some one as he did so.

A club swished by his head and cracked him painfully on the shoulder. A mumbled curse sounded right in front of him. Like a flash, he stepped in the direction of the voice and cut loose with a terrific right, following up with a left hook.

Both blows landed, but the left thudded into the chest of a man already knocked cold with a clip full on the point of the chin.

"Come on, you other bushwhacker!" Cabel challenged jeeringly side-stepping the instant he spoke and setting himself for another lunge. "Ah! I thought so!" he muttered triumphantly, letting drive a vicious left-right as he heard a pair of feet shuffle in the spot he had just vacated.

The left swing was a clean miss. The right glanced harmlessly off the invisible foe's head; but the force of the lunge sent Cabel crashing into him hard.

"Damn you! That'll fix you!" Cabel felt the hot breath of the words hissed squarely in his face, the prick of a knife point in his stomach. Then he had the smaller man in a viselike grip, arms pinioned harmlessly at his sides.

"Drop that knife!" he commanded, squeezing down until he heard a gasp of pain. "Drop it, you rat, or I'll crush every rib in you. There! Now get to hell out of here while the getting's good!" The instant he heard the knife thud in the dust, Cabel spun his prisoner around and fairly hurled him away.

Listening until the running footsteps faded, Cabel struck a match. The man he had knocked out lay face down where he had dropped.

The victim of the attempted robbery lay, too, where the club had felled him. Ascertaining that he was breathing regularly, Cabel shouldered him and started back down the road.

Cabel intended to leave him at the barroom, where, doubtless, some one knew him and would take care of him. But on arriving there, the place was closed. He was tempted to leave him on the veranda anyway but on second thought, decided not to.

Suppose, after all, the man really was more than just stunned, had a frac-

tured skull or brain concussion? It was better to lug him on down to the bungalow and examine him under light.

Carrying him inside, Cabel stretched him out on a cot and inspected his injured head. A sigh of relief escaped him when he discovered only a small welt on the man's head where the club had struck.

His mind eased on that score, Cabel stepped back and took a good look at his unconscious guest.

He was a small man about fifty years old—an Englishman, Cabel thought. He was totally bald and his thin face was sunburned to the color of light mahogany.

His clothes and boots were new. This, coupled with his overindulgence of liquor, set him down in Cabel's mind as some recent arrival from the hinterland, celebrating his return to civilization.

It seemed unlikely that he would emerge from his stupor for some time, so Cabel doused the light and set off to have his swim.

Returning nearly three hours later, Cabel found the bungalow ablaze with light. "Guess the old boy's up and stirring," he said. Crossing the veranda softly, he shoved the door open and stepped inside.

The "old boy" was up, but not stirring. He sat at the table, head buried in his arms. He looked up with a start at the slam of the door.

"Keep your seat," Cabel said, dragging up a chair for himself. "How do you feel, better?"

"Did you bring me here from the bar?" the other asked, eying Cabel a trifle sheepishly. "I guess I drank a little too much to-night. First time I've been back to town in five months, and I——"

"I guess you did," Cabel interrupted, laughing, "seeing as you don't seem to remember those two thugs following you outside and slugging you."

A look of mingled dismay and alarm spread over the older man's face. Frantically his hand dug inside his shirt, then withdrew quickly. His face shed its alarm.

"They had no chance to get anything," Cabel said, and went on to explain what had happened. When he finished the old man reached over and pressed his hand warmly.

"My name is Sam Peters," he said.

"Mine is Cabel, Jim Cabel."

"Government service?"

"No. I'm from the States. San Francisco. Selling gold-dredger equipment. The man I came here to see is away. I'm just marking time until he shows up. Been here three days, but this devilish heat has about got my goat. About one more day will finish me."

Peters said nothing, but sat watching the man across the table through half-closed lids.

Jim Cabel was young, about twenty-five. He was six feet, with an inch to spare. His hundred and eighty pounds went to make up a physique rippling with muscle. His big, square-jawed face, crowned with an unruly mop of sandy hair, was far from handsome.

Peters took note of a pair of steely gray eyes that met his prolonged stare without flinching; a chin square and strong as that resolute jaw; a mouth firm but with the trace of an ever-present smile lurking at the corners.

Sam Peters dug into his shirt, extracted a small wallet and tossed it on the table. "Lad," he said suddenly, "to-night you saved me a fortune!"

CHAPTER II.

A FLASH AT NIGHT.

WITH curious eyes, Cabel watched Peters slip the rubber band off the wallet and bend it open. Cabel's mind filled with visions of a huge pre-

cious stone of some sort, or perhaps a handful of smaller stones. He could not suppress a little snort of disappointment when Peters produced nothing more startling than a soiled, folded paper.

A faint smile crept into the old man's face, changing for the first time the grim, mahogany mask. "I know this map's not what you expected to see me drag out," he said. "Nevertheless, what you're gazing at represents a fortune—how big no one knows!"

"Buried treasure?" Cabel spoke up, an eagerness in his tone that brought another faint smile flickering across Peters' face.

"It's buried all right—but not in the ground, as you imply the word. It lies within a small area in the Salwin River valley. A wild, jungle stretch infested with those black Lissu devils.

"You can count on the fingers of one hand the white men that ventured into that region and came out to tell the tale. This map was made by one of the men that went in and came out—but he didn't live long after he got out. I'll tell you how I came by the map.

"About a fortnight since, I was returning here after taking a party of plant collectors down through Chimili Pass and across the Salwin into Yunnan Province. Halting at a Lutz village on the Salwin one afternoon, I learned of the presence in the neighborhood of a sick white man.

"I found the poor devil lying in a hut, delirious. The blasted fever had him at death grips. I could see his end was near. I stayed by his side all afternoon, hoping he might speak—that I might learn his name, or something about him.

"Just before he died that night he woke from his stupor with a wild outburst of laughter. Then he began to shriek: 'Gold! Gold! Enough for a dozen men! Mine! It's all mine! The heathen devils drove me off, but I've a

map! I made it myself! I can find my way back!'

"Then, as suddenly as he had emerged from the stupor he went back. Five minutes later he was dead.

"Next morning I searched his ragged clothing. There was not a single clew to his identity. The only thing I found was this map, and not a mark on it to tell who he was or whence he came.

"When I saw the map detailed the Lissu country, I wasn't long in calling to mind the wild talk I had paid no attention to the night before.

"There wasn't a doubt in my mind then that the poor devil had uncovered a treasure in that nest of barbarians. He had been driven off before he had a chance to take anything. But in making his escape he had jotted down a map of the course he fled along.

"Upon reaching the Lutz village three days before I happened along, his doom was already sealed. He had just enough strength, the Lutz headman told me, to crawl into a hut. He never came out again.

"Well, that's how I came by the map. I saw the poor devil buried decently, then hit out for Myitkina."

"Without following up the map?" Cabel demanded, amazed.

"I was in no position to. I was alone. My supplies were running short. I had precious few shells left for my gun. There was nothing to do but come back here and organize properly."

"A big party, you mean?"

"Party nothing!" Peters replied scornfully. "Just two men with the right stuff in 'em, and plenty of arms in case of a brush with the Lissus, will turn the trick where a big party would make a mess of things."

Cabel straightened up in his chair like a shot. Eagerness swept over his face, sparkled in his widened eyes. "Have you got a partner yet?" he asked anxiously.

Peters shook his head.

"By gosh I'd sure like to get in on it!" Cabel cried. "I'm sick of this dredger racket. I've hardly made expenses since I left Frisco a year ago. Would you consider me?"

The faint smile that twice before crossed Peters' face came as a broad grin this time. "Great Christopher! why do you suppose I've been telling you all this? I'm not drunk now, like I was up there in the barroom to-night shouting my secret to the world and like as not flourishing the map around.

"Consider a big, strapping devil like you? You'd better believe it! You've got the stuff in you; and I know you're a lad that's on the up-and-up. You're not the kind to try to bilk me out of my share of what we find."

Cabel's jaw hardened. Emotion welled in his throat. For seconds words failed to come out. But finally he said:

"By gosh! it's mighty fine of you, putting your trust in a stranger."

"Oh, dry up!" Peters growled. "I know human nature. Even if you hadn't done me a neat turn to-night, I'd have known you are square. But I'll tell you, lad, we'll have to scrape up an outfit as early as possible to-morrow and clear out.

"Even pulling out that soon we'll like as not be followed. Better turn in now and snatch a bit of sleep. As long as there's an extra cot here I won't bother to traipse on down to my shack."

Cabel bade the old man good night and strode outside. The air was cooler now, but sleep was not for him. He was wide awake, his mind agog with the great adventure so unexpectedly cast in his path.

At the first inkling of daylight he heard Peters rummaging around inside. After bolting a cold breakfast, they set off on the business of collecting an outfit.

By ten o'clock everything was arranged, even to the hiring of a muleteer and two coolie carriers. Eleven o'clock

found the tiny caravan at the river ferry, boarding the launch that plied between Myitkina and Wangmaw, downstream on the far shore. Half an hour later they were disembarked.

There followed a short spell of fussing about, and much loud talk and shouting by the Kachin muleteer, a villainous-looking fellow named Tingo.

Finally, he got the mules loaded to his satisfaction. Then, cuffing one of the Yunnan coolies soundly for daring to protest the weight of his pack, he started the mules going.

Soon, after leaving the river, the party plunged directly into the tropical forest, Cabel and Peters loafing along some yards behind the train. Peters was in high spirits because of their unheralded departure.

"Outside of the natives that gather every time a boat comes or goes," he said, "there wasn't a soul at the ferry to see us leave. I'm beginning to think maybe I didn't talk last night, or exhibit the map, either.

"Like as not, those beggars you routed were but after what money I had on me. Jim, I've a mind to have you kick me for an imaginative old woman, who's sent us flying off with an outfit about one quarter adequate for the journey we're undertaking."

"Say, don't talk," Cabel laughed. "My imagination was working full blast, too. I didn't draw a full breath till we crossed the river. But I guess we've left our troubles behind us."

Peters laughed harshly. "Some, probably," he said. "But don't you be disappointed. Once we turn off this government track and head along the frontier toward Lissuland you'll like as not run into it again—plenty to keep both them big paws o' yours busy handling it."

At dusk the party reached the deserted bungalow and servant huts at Wowsong station. The versatile Tingo soon had a fire roaring in the bungalow,

beds rolled out on the floor, and a satisfying meal dished up.

The meal over, Cabel and Peters sat out on the dark veranda, talking and smoking for quite a spell before turning in.

Tired from the excitement of the day and the long tramp through the jungle hills, Cabel dropped off to sleep almost the moment he touched the bed.

It seemed to Cabel that he had hardly dozed off, when he opened his eyes to stare into the blinding flood of a flash light. Then two forms hurled out of darkness upon him. Before he could make a single move both arms were pinioned, a gag was forced into his mouth.

CHAPTER III

BLAST THEIR HIDES!

THE rough, painful cramming home of the burlap gag fully awakened Cabel. Enraged, he set up a terrific struggle; but it was too late.

A man clung to either arm and another had him by the hair. His wrists were forced behind him and tied, and his ankles served the same way. Then the light went out and there came a padding of retreating feet.

Lying there cursing furiously under his breath, he heard the veranda creak under the weight of the men who had effected his capture with such swift, silent efficiency.

For several minutes he listened for sounds without; but at length turned his attention to thinking. What of Peters? Had he been killed in the daring plot to get the map—for map it certainly was these marauders were after—or was he merely bound and gagged?

Inches at a time he worked himself across the floor toward the old man's bed. Finally he bumped against a twisting, squirming body. Relieved, Cabel rested a moment, then started experimenting with his own bonds.

Five painful minutes convinced him he was tied to stay. The only thing he might do was to try to dislodge the gag. The cloth holding it into his mouth was knotted at the back of his head. If he could get the knot hooked over a chair round, freeing his mouth would be simple.

Propelling himself around on the floor he finally collided with a chair. Half a minute later the gag was out. Then he wormed his way back across the room beside Peters.

"I slipped my gag," Cabel told his companion. "Now I'll try to pull yours off."

After several attempts Cabel caught the knot between his teeth and pulled the binding loose. Peters emitted a snort of rage. Then came an outburst of cursing.

"Hey!" Cabel protested. "Some of those birds may be hanging around outside. We'll be gagged again."

"Outside nothing!" Peters exploded. "They've gone."

"Did they get the map?" Cabel asked anxiously.

"Of course they got it," Peters groaned.

The younger man started to say something else. Peters cut him short. "Talking won't do any good," he declared. "We've got to get loose. And there's no use yelling for Tingo or the coolies. They're tied same as us. If my blasted teeth weren't up there on the table I'd soon have that rope off your arms."

"By gosh!—I never thought about that," Cabel cried eagerly.

He set to work with a confidence that knew no bounds—until he had gnawed at the tough hemp rope for some fifteen minutes. Then he accepted the task for just what it was—torture.

An hour dragged by. For the hundredth time he twisted around to spit out a mouthful of blood and particles of fiber that stung his raw lips and

gums like fire. By now he realized the hopelessness of the undertaking.

"I can't do it, Sam," he gasped. "I haven't even got through a single strand; and already my mouth is raw as beefsteak. I've got to try some other way. Let me think a minute. I'll get loose somehow."

For all of an hour Cabel explored the dark interior. He discovered any number of sharp-cornered objects. None, however, lay so he could get either feet or hands against it and saw the ropes through.

At length, tired out, wrists chafed and burning, he propelled himself back to where Peters lay grumbling and cursing.

"Haven't found a thing possible to rub again and fray this plagued rope," Cabel reported. "We're stuck, it looks like, till somebody comes along in the morning and cuts us loose."

"Morning your eye!" Peters snapped. "Caravans coming or going don't hit this camp spot until late afternoon or evening. And one may not come along here for three or four days. By Christopher, we won't stay here tied up like this!"

Miserable as he felt, Cabel had to laugh at the old man's wrathful outburst. "Well," he said dryly, "the prospects of getting around it don't look any too bright."

"I won't stay here!" Peters fumed. "Never! And all the while them blasted crooks getting farther and farther away. If you can't find a way to hack them ropes off, I will!"

Again Cabel laughed as the room filled with the din of the old man thumping and scraping over the bare floor. A moment later there came a little gasp of surprise and pain as Peters collided with something, then: "Hi! the stove! Did you try that?"

"Sure; but the legs are rounded on the front. I couldn't get at the back of 'em."

"I'll get at 'em!" Peters muttered. "I'll turn the thing on its back. I'll be——"

Further words were drowned in the crash of the iron stove as it toppled off the blocks. There followed a short spell of clattering and clanking, mingled with Peters' grunting and fits of muttering, then a triumphant sigh.

"Got my legs astraddle of something sticking up," Peters announced. "This blasted rope on my ankles won't last long now—there! Now for my hands. I'll soon have you loose lad."

Five minutes later both men were on their feet, Cabel drenching his burning mouth at the water bucket, old Peters trying to coax the huge hanging lamp into flame. Finally, the wick took hold, and leaping off the chair, Peters dashed outside.

"Just as I thought," he reported on returning. "Tingo and the coolies tied and gagged. For a couple of puddin' heads, we take first prize."

"Instead of suspecting something and being on guard when we were allowed to leave town without a single person turning up to watch us off, we go to sleep like a couple of idiots and let a bunch of pirates do this to us."

"Do you suppose they went back to Myitkina?"

"Never. They're on the way to the Salwin right now. Outfitted this afternoon after we left, and just stopped off here long enough to steal the map. They thought they'd tied us safe till to-morrow night at least—or possibly for a week."

"Before to-morrow night they'll be past Seniku, the last place to head 'em off by telegraph. For between there and Hpimaw, the last police post, is the path through the jungle that you take to go to Chimili Pass."

"Anyway, in another hour it will be light enough to see which way they headed. So about all we can do till then is sit down and cuss our luck."

"Well, you do the cussing for both of us," Cabel laughed. "I'll put in the time doctoring this raw mouth."

Daylight proved Peters' fears. The marauders had fled in the direction of Seniku. The discovery goaded Peters to action. He dashed back up the hill. When Cabel gained the bungalow a few seconds behind him, he was emptying boxes and cases onto the floor.

"We've got to overhaul them before they pass Seniku," Peters explained, "and that means traveling light. Here!" He kicked an empty pack sack across the floor. "Dump all our cartridges and belts and the four pistols in there. If there's any space left throw in a few tins of meat and some of that bread."

"Leaving everything else here?" Cabel asked in amazement.

"That's it. If we don't get to Seniku before they pass, we'll have to follow 'em and fight it out. The military police won't budge from the barracks."

"I know 'em of old, blast 'em! They'll suggest telegraphing a warning on to Hpimaw, even though we make it plain the pirates are turning off halfway between the two places."

Bewildered at this swift display of action on the part of one he had come to look upon as an easy-going old man, Cabel filled up the sack as directed, slung it onto his shoulders and picked up his carbine. Then he stood waiting for the next move.

"Tingo!" Peters thundered as, retrieving his own carbine from the litter on the floor, he whirled and caught sight of the frightened muleteer peering in at the veranda door. "Pack 'em all up and come Seniku much fast! We no there when you come, you wait one day. Not come then you b'long back Myitkina. Come on, Jim!"

Hour after hour they toiled up and down the winding track through jungle hills. A brief halt at noon to gulp down a meal of tinned meat and bread, and

on they went, Peters in the lead, setting a furious pace.

A pace that made Cabel marvel. Ever since morning the wiry old fellow had kept it up without slackening, never talking, just forging ahead, with neck bowed low like an animal following the scent of the trail.

With the coming of late afternoon, Peters' grim, silent mood passed, as did the scowl of hate and rage that had masked his face since dawn. His stubborn confidence of overtaking their quarry before Seniku had begun to waver.

"The devils must be loaded light," he remarked as he slackened his gait and dropped back beside Cabel. "And they're pushing their mules hard. It's plain as day they're keen to get through Seniku to-night. Like as not, too, they cut the telegraph wires, so in case we did get loose ourselves and rushed back to Myitkina we couldn't warn the post there to hold 'em up at Seniku."

"I've been watching for signs and I don't see any less than four or five hours old. They'll beat us there, sure, blast their hides! And I'm afraid it will be like I said: the military won't start out after 'em. They'll stall us off by telegraphing ahead to Hpimaw."

Cabel offered no reply for a moment; but inside him an ugly mood was astir. His temper on edge at the start, by now it had soared high.

He yearned for a clash with their fleeing enemy; hoped they had gotten through the town ahead; hoped, too, that the military would refuse to pursue them. And when he did speak he made no pretense of concealing his thoughts.

"To hell with the military, whether we lose the race to Seniku or not!" he cried. "We'll pass through with our mouths shut and overtake the dirty rats. Be our own military!"

"Then we'll be sure just what kind of a deal we're getting. I'm aching all

over to knock the suffering tar out of a few of those birds, just to even up for this mouthful of fire I'm carrying."

Peters looked up and grinned, his shrewd, little brown eyes glittering with admiration. "You better mean that—every blasted word of it!" he declared. "Because you've got my mind drumming on the same idea."

CHAPTER IV

HOT WORDS.

JUST at dusk the weary pair mounted a high, bald knoll and tramped down the other side into Seniku, a sleepy little village shut in on all four sides by low, scrub-covered hills. Running through the center of the closely huddled collection of some fifty squatty, thatch-roofed bamboo huts and shanties, was a narrow, dusty road.

On the terrace gouged out of the hillside above the village perched three rows of weather-beaten log barracks, roofed with corrugated iron.

The narrow village road was deserted. But outside the commissary store, a long, one-story tin building that occupied a court back from the thoroughfare, were congregated a score or so natives, Chinese traders, and two or three sepoy soldiers.

Peters scanned these closely, as well as the four white men lounging on the wide veranda stretching across the front of the commissary. He uttered a grunt of disappointment.

"None of our devils here," he said to Cabel in a low tone. "Evidently they went straight through. But they'll have to halt at dark. The mules can't keep up the furious pace they've been setting all this while. And the mulmen and coolies won't keep it up. We have plenty of time to overhaul 'em between now and morning. Best thing to do now is eat a bite and snatch a little rest before starting on. The commissary keeper will fix us up with a meal."

Apparently unnoticed, either by natives or white men, Peters and his young companion climbed the steps and passed into the commissary.

Half an hour later, when they emerged back onto the platform, a white man in officer's attire darted out of the shadows at one side of the lighted doorway and accosted Peters.

At a word from him six stalwart, fierce-visaged Churka sepoys, garbed in short-panted blue uniforms and broad-brimmed hats with chin straps, sprang into view. With carbines outthrust they formed a semicircle around their subaltern and the two adventurers.

"You are Sam Peters?" the subaltern suddenly demanded of Peters.

"That's me," the old man admitted, surprised. "Why?"

"Sorry," came the startling announcement. "But I must place you and your companion under arrest. Hand over your carbines to my men!"

Peters recoiled as if the words had been a blow in the face.

Before his bewilderment cleared, one of the sepoys had snatched his carbine off his shoulder. No less startled, Cabel let another soldier relieve him of his weapon, while he just stood staring incredulously at the officer.

Finally Peters found his tongue. "Arrest?" he demanded angrily. "What's the idea?"

"Commandant's orders," the subaltern replied crisply.

Peters turned in disgust to Cabel.

"Looks like our crew halted long enough after all to stir up some deviltry," he said grimly. Then, turning to the officer he said: "Take us up to the commandant, sergeant. I promise you we'll get to the bottom of this rotten business quick enough!"

Without a word the officer wheeled. The four sepoys fell in behind Cabel and Peters, and the short march to the barracks was on.

The old man seemed not in the least

perturbed over the sudden cropping out of a new difficulty. Five minutes with the commandant, he confidently told Cabel, as they plodded along the dusty road, would set matters straight.

On arriving at the barracks, matters took an alarming turn. Instead of the commandant's office, they found they had followed the sergeant into a large room with barred windows. At one end was an iron door, which only too obviously opened into the barracks prison.

The instant the door closed, two armed sepoy planted themselves in front of it. Two others glided off to one side, eyes fastened upon the sergeant, who had continued across the room and now stood bent over a desk. After a moment he turned around. Words were on his lips.

Peters cut him short. "What kind of a game is this, sergeant?" he demanded hotly. "We came up here to see the commandant; but it looks like you're——"

"The commandant is not here!" the officer snapped.

"Then how about our frame-up arrest being his orders?"

Cabel started forward, but halted abruptly when a sepoy emitted a yelp of warning and brought his carbine to his shoulder.

The sergeant, a grim-faced, elderly man, whose big thick-lipped mouth warned of a quick temper and stubborn nature eyed Cabel coolly for a moment.

"The commandant issued orders before he left this afternoon," the sergeant said finally. "They were to arrest you two if you showed up here, and hold you until he returned."

"Arrest for what?" Peters burst out impatiently. "Great Christopher! tell a man what he's done, to be dragged in here and have guns trained on him like a blasted criminal."

The sergeant's tight lips parted and re-formed into a sneer. "You know," he retorted. "Escorting this big raw-

bones of a missionary beyond Myitkina—when the government forbids it."

Peters almost fell over backward from surprise. After a moment he straightened up and stood staring at the speaker with bulging eyes.

Then he shot a glance at Cabel, and back again to the officer. "Missionary? Him a missionary?" he gasped. "Why, man, you're trying to spiff me!"

"No; and you're not spiffing me!" the sergeant hurled back. "The commandant got his information from a reliable source, or he wouldn't have issued the orders he did."

"Yeh! that caravan that went through early this afternoon!" Cabel boomed out in fury. "The dirty hounds weren't satisfied with tying us up while we slept at Wowsong last night, and then robbing us."

"For fear we might get loose and follow 'em, they stop here and scattered a pack of lies. And like a bunch of fools you guys fall easily for their line of guff!"

Cabel regretted those last hot words—even before he saw their effect blazoned on the officer's livid face. Peters realized the blunder, too. Darting Cabel a vicious look he launched a desperate effort to smooth over matters.

The sergeant silenced him with a threatening gesture. Then barking out a command that sent a sepoy scurrying to open the iron door, he addressed Cabel in a voice shaking with fury.

"Get in there!" he thundered, "before I forget I'm dealing with a prisoner—not man to man. Day after to-morrow when the commandant returns you can tell him he's a fool—if you haven't learned a little sense meantime."

Neither man moved immediately. The next instant the painful jab of a gun in the back sent each toward the iron door.

As they passed through, Peters staged a last desperate effort to declare himself,

but the sergeant only glared hostilely and motioned the door closed.

The two armed sepoys hustled them down the corridor and through another door, banged it closed and left them in darkness.

"Talk about fools!" Peters groaned wrathfully as the bolt shot home.

"I know it," Cabel admitted miserably, pressing the old man's arm. "You sure picked a lemon when you picked me to go with you. First rattle out of the box I gum up the machinery."

A noise suspiciously like a sob came from Peters. Cabel felt a hand grip his arm with a strength he had never dreamed the old man possessed. "Pshaw!" Peters mumbled. "Forget me barking at you the way I did. Like as not, if you hadn't roughed that thick-skulled sergeant I'd have."

"No you wouldn't. You'd have used your head and explained things. And we wouldn't be in this fix."

"That's where you're wrong," Peters declared with finality. "The commandant's orders were to arrest us and hold us till he got back. And orders are orders with these blasted military. Old Sergeant Nit-wit would have held us, no matter if we'd told him our whole story. Convinced him even that we were up against a frame-up."

"He'd simply have blinked his eyes and said he was sorry, but we'd have to stay put till the commandant got back and ordered us released. Lad, we were simply caught napping again. Walked right into a booby trap."

"But who in the devil would have thought——"

"Nobody," Peters interrupted. "Nor that business last night, either. But the fact remains that we're here."

"Then we've certainly got to get out of here."

"If we don't before the commandant comes back," Peters replied grimly, "we're ruined. We'll never overtake that gang. They'll be into the Lissu

country. Without a map I'd never be able to track 'em in a hundred years."

"Well, let's get busy and find out how bad off we are." Cabel struck a match and held it over his head.

The brief flare of light sent no hope pounding through the breast of either. Nothing short of an ax would open an avenue of escape through the thick log walls of the ten-foot-square room. Only a child could crawl through the slit of a window high up at one end.

When the match died down Cabel dropped onto the lone cot the room contained, pulling Peters down beside him.

"Doesn't look so good," he remarked gloomily.

"Tell better after I sound those logs. May find one with a dry-rot spot. The old sergeant was so worked up he forgot to search us, and I've still my knife."

"Say, for the love of Mike!" Cabel suddenly exclaimed.

"Now what?"

"That big dub didn't even notice my pack sack. And I didn't think about it till just now, either. Sam, there's a brace of automatics apiece in this sack!"

"Great Christopher!" Peters grumbled. "All you think about is fight. I ain't saying I won't use a gun to get out of here; but I'm not spoiling for a fight with the military."

"We'll try my knife first. Just cutting our way out won't stir up much fuss. But forcing our way out with a gun, even without firing a shot—why, they'd trail us clear over into Yunnan."

"All right, all right! Try the knife first," Cabel agreed. "But it won't make me mad if in the end we have to inveigle that hard-boiled sergeant in here and stick a gun under his nose."

As the night wore on, however, prospects of escaping by stealth ebbed lower and lower. By midnight Peters, averse as he was to resorting to pistols, admitted there was no alternative.

Every inch of floor and walls he had

prospected with his knife in quest of a soft or rotten spot. But none had he found. He knew an ordinary pocket-knife would never carve through one of those hard seasoned logs, or even a floor plank, in one night.

The decision to force a way out arrived at, Cabel soon had both sets of pistols loaded and in their belts. Buckling on one, he handed the other to Peters. Then discarding the rifle cartridges and dumping those belonging to the pistols back into the pack sack, along with their slender store of provisions, Cabel said eagerly:

"Now to stir up a rumpus. When the sergeant or somebody else opens the door to find out what's going on, won't he get a surprise, though!"

CHAPTER V.

GREAT CHRISTOPHER!

FOR fully half a minute Cabel kicked at the heavy door with his thick-soled boots. "That'll bring somebody," he declared confidently as he stopped to listen for footsteps in the corridor. But not a sound came to his ear.

"Try again," Peters urged. "That door's pretty thick."

For another half minute the small quarters were filled with the din. Again they strained their ears but heard nothing. With an impatient curse Cabel set himself for a third assault on the door; but just then Peters uttered a little squawk and clutched his companion's arm.

"It's no use," he said dolefully. "More of our rotten luck."

"What do you mean?" was Cabel's startled retort.

"I doubt if a cannon fired in here would send a noise through the walls louder than a whisper. This is the prison madhouse. When they get a native or two that's gone loony from drinking *shamshu*, they throw 'em in here, where they can rant and rave at

the top of their lungs without disturbing anybody outside."

Though he had a sickening feeling the old man spoke the truth, Cabel assailed the door with redoubled fury. But as before, the noise brought no response.

"Satisfied now?" Peters asked grimly.

"Looks that way," Cabel admitted. "But gosh, Sam, it means——"

"It means that pack of cutthroats has put us down and out!" Peters cried bitterly.

"Somebody'll open that door in the morning," Cabel said. "That will still give us time to overhaul our outfit."

"If we could get out of here then, yes; but we can't."

"Can't! Why can't we?" Cabel flared up.

"Why, by daylight the barracks and yard outside will swarm with men. It would be rank suicide to try to break through then."

"Oh!" Cabel grunted, as if some one had suddenly poked him in the stomach. "Sam, I don't think of anything. I guess my head was made to crack nuts on. Now what the devil can we do? There must be a way out of this."

"It's torture being penned up here knowing every tick of the clock is putting that treasure farther and farther out of our reach. Don't you suppose we could patch it up with the sergeant in the morning—explain things?"

Peters laughed harshly. "Didn't I tell you orders were orders with these blasted military?" he demanded gruffly. "Why, even in the face of positive proof that you weren't a missionary, he'd hold us till the commandant returned."

"If we can't escape before daylight we'll get no chance till to-morrow night. Too late to overtake our quarry. I wish now I'd started in with my knife early to-night. I might have struck a pithy place in toward the heart of a log."

"Start now, then!" Cabel cried

eagerly. "We'll take turns working. There's five hours ahead of us yet. That's a long time."

"Not long enough," Peters said glumly. "But we might as well try anyway." He strode over to the end wall and presently Cabel heard the crunch of steel against hard, dry wood.

For fifteen minutes steady, Peters hacked and gouged. When finally he paused to rest, Cabel lighted a match and eagerly inspected the work. Discovery of a hole scarcely three inches deep by two across drew a gasp of disappointment from him.

With trembling fingers Cabel grasped the knife and attacked the cavity. A quarter hour passed, and lengthened into a half. Peters had ceased to plead with him to turn over the knife and rest a while. He stood off to one side, scarcely daring to breathe. Any instant he expected the blade to snap under Cabel's savage manipulation. And shortly it did snap off.

Striking a match, Cabel inspected his labor. "Got to find some other way, Sam," he declared. "I thought I'd dug a hole big enough to put your head in. But all I did was double the one you started. And now one blade is gone. We'd be a week digging out, if we had a dozen knives."

"Well, I give up," Peters said dejectedly. "It's just not our luck to be in the running, I guess."

"Give up nothing!" Cabel retorted. Then for nearly a minute he stood silent, thinking. His next words came with the abruptness of a shot.

"I'll tell you how we'll get out of here! We'll burn out, that's how!"

"Burn out!" Peters repeated, aghast. "Great Christopher!"

"Burn out!" Cabel thundered. "Build a fire against that end wall. The draft under the door will fan it into those lower logs. Eat a door right through for us. No hard-boiled fool is going to hold us here and let a bunch of

crooks do us. If you think so you're crazy!"

"You're the one that's crazy," Peters shrilled. "That's arson!"

"I don't care what it is!" Cabel struck a match and dropped on his knees in search of the knife. "I'm ready for murder, if that's necessary to get out of here. Ah!"—with an eager cry he sprang up with the knife.

For the next three minutes action fairly charged the atmosphere. Convinced nothing could swerve Cabel, the old man reluctantly plunged into the scheme. Heaped against the wall was a pile of whittled shavings, sprinkled with oil from three tins of sardines. A match snapped and the shavings leaped into blue flame.

Cabel stepped back beside Peters. There they stood for all of a minute in silence. Cabel's big, square-jawed face carried a savage expression of eagerness, satisfaction. His eyes glowed brighter and widened as the flames leaped higher and higher. The old man watched with narrowed eyes, fascinated by the fire, yet appalled by the daring of the deed.

By now the blaze had attacked the two lower logs in earnest and started creeping upward. Suddenly Peters shuddered. A reckless light leaped into his eyes. An eager look, savage as that on Cabel's face, smothered the mask of fear on his own leathery countenance.

"By heaven, lad!" Peters burst out, "for a minute or two your wild idea knocked me into a cocked hat. But sight of those blasted logs melting away like butter has started my old blood on a rampage, too. I know we're due for plenty of trouble if we're caught, but that——"

"We won't get caught, don't worry about that!" Cabel cut him short. "We'll escape. Maybe not through the wall, either. Somebody may see that smoke pouring out the window and rush in here to investigate. Then we'll un-

limber our guns and go out the way we came in."

"I hope the sentry out front doesn't see the smoke," Peters retorted anxiously. "Ten chances to one he'll rouse the whole barracks before starting to investigate."

Cabel hadn't thought of that contingency and admitted as much; but he added hopefully: "Well, if he doesn't spot it pretty blamed soon he won't find us here. Another fifteen minutes and there'll be a hole in the wall you could drive a mule through. Look at that fire go now!"

"Yes, and look at that smoke," Peters remarked grimly a moment later. "Twice the amount that blasted window can carry outside."

With a start Cabel raised his eyes. A thick cloud had begun to eddy back from the window. Already half the ceiling was obscured. Swallowing the lump the discovery brought into his throat he turned to Peters.

"A little smoke won't kill us," he said lightly. "Anyway, there'll be a hole through the wall before the room can possibly fill up." There was a grin on his face, assurance in his tone; but he hadn't been able to shed the uneasy light in his eyes.

Peters noticed. He chuckled audibly, and the thin, straight line that for minutes had been his mouth twisted into a faint smile.

"You're a stubborn devil!" he declared, eying Cabel admiringly. "Drop us out of a balloon and you'd be telling me we'd sprout wings before we hit the ground. Look at that smoke settling down on our heads! Before the fire burns through that wall we'll be suffocated. We've got to put the fire out—for a while, anyway."

Cabel heard the words without the flicker of an eyelash. The grin on his face expanded. "Why smother?" he said indifferently. "There's plenty of fresh air sweeping in under the door.

We can stretch out with our snoots to the crack and weather the smoke for a few minutes. By gosh, Sam, we can't give up now, when we're right on the verge of escape, can we?"

Peters' reply came in the relief that spread over his face, the film that dulled his lively little eyes.

"Blast me!" he blurted out after a moment. "I thought I was a rough, tough old coot when it came to fighting, but you—why, the devil himself couldn't keep you down!"

"Fast as an obstacle comes up you squash it and prepare for the next one. Well, the smoke's rolling down here fast. Let's see before it's too late if there's enough air coming under that door to do us."

• CHAPTER VI RUNNING FEET.

FIVE minutes later both men lay stretched out, faces pressed close to the crack under the door. The smoke had settled to the floor, but the rush of air from the corridor rendered breathing easy. —

Before another five minutes dragged by, a grave fear began to creep into Cabel. The flow of air smelled strongly of smoke. He shifted his position and inhaled another breath. Smoke *was* coming in from the corridor.

It had swirled down through the cracks in the cell planking, drifted forward and rushed up through the corridor floor. In two or three minutes deadly fumes instead of air would be sweeping in under the door.

Cabel groaned as their peril drove home to him. Already Peters lay coughing and gasping for breath. He was slowly smothering. Waiting until the fire burned an exit in the wall would mean the old man's death. He had to be gotten into the open air without delay.

Sucking in a burning mixture of air and smoke Cabel got to his feet. The

fire showed as a nebulous glow through the murk. He moved across the room. A brief glance at close quarters before the intense heat drove him back sent hope racing through him.

The blaze had sunk far into the logs. Only a thin shell remained unburned. If he had something to use for a battering ram, how easily he could crash through.

Suddenly Cabel thought of the cot. With one of the iron side rails a hole could be punched in the weakened wall, large enough, at least, to let out some of the deadly smoke.

Lungs afire from holding his breath so long, eyes brimming and smarting, Cabel whirled and sprang for the cot. Yanking off the covers and springs, he discovered the side rails were not detachable.

A gasp of fury broke from his lips. His bull strength doubled by desperation, he seized the unwieldy cot as if it were a vaulting pole and charged across the room.

The red blur of fire burst into a thousand sparks and flying embers at the impact. The iron frame gouged through the frail barrier and wedged tightly.

With a furious kick Cabel sent it crashing the rest of the way through, leaving a ragged, fire-rimmed hole, through which the smoke raged like a tiny cyclone.

An exultant sob escaped him as he wheeled and plunged into the surging wall of fumes. He forgot his tortured eyes, forgot the folly of trying to breathe yet, and sucked his lungs full of choking, searing smoke. But nothing mattered now. Escape was at hand!

Coughing and wheezing he staggered across the room and slung Peters onto his shoulders. Eyes half blinded, he sought the breach in the wall. The jagged outline of smoldering fire loomed up. He plunged out into the starlit night.

In his eagerness to get out Cabel forgot the five-foot drop to the ground. He landed off-balance and sprawled headlong. The unconscious Peters catapulted from his shoulder.

For a moment Cabel lay where he fell, greedily drinking in the cool, refreshing air. Then of a sudden the patter of running feet, and excited voices roused him. In a flash he was on his feet.

Whirling about, Cabel saw two men with carbines break out of the barracks shadows.

Sight of the huge figure that seemed to have sprung out of the very ground at their approach startled the sepoys. They halted abruptly, for an instant paused in indecision. In that instant Cabel thought and acted.

Sweeping Peters into his arms, Cabel darted past the corner of the building, then swerved and headed for a shadowy mass of brush. A few strides and he was in a tangled bamboo thicket. Safe here for a moment or so, he paused to get a better hold on his limp burden, and to ease his labored breathing.

"Rave on, you hardheads!" he muttered jeeringly as he listened to the hubbub back by the barracks. "While you're waiting for a general to come along and tell you it's O. K. to chase me, I'll be covering ground."

With lowered head Cabel plowed through the rank thicket. He had no idea where he was going, nor did he care. He was covering ground. That was what counted. Before long he'd clear the village proper, reach a place to hide till Peters came to. The old man knew the country. He would mighty soon lead the way out of danger.

After two hundred yards Cabel emerged onto the crest of a bracken-covered hill, raced down the other side into a narrow, rocky gully, and stumbled along at top speed until too tired to go farther.

Laying Peters down, Cabel listened

intently for sounds of pursuit. Only the angry hum of a cloud of sand flies came to his ears. With a little cry of exultation he stretched out in the dry creek bed, and for the next five minutes gorged himself with air.

Day was breaking. Unless Peters came to shortly and led the way into more secure territory, they might have to hide until darkness came again.

Hardly had Cabel got up and started toward his companion, when he heard Peters stir and mumble something. Cabel found him conscious, but it was several minutes before he was himself.

When Peters had listened to Cabel's hurried account of smashing the wall and of eluding the sepoys, he jumped up in alarm.

"That means get out of here quick!" he cried. "The second it gets light they'll see where you tore into the bamboo. We'll have a whole company of military on our heels."

"Do you know where we are?" Cabel asked anxiously.

"Not exactly. But this gully comes out in the jungle along the Nmai River. Once we get down there——"

Peters' words ended with the abruptness of a shot.

"Now what?" Cabel asked, startled.

"My guns!" Peters wailed. "Both of 'em are gone!"

Like a flash Cabel's hands dropped. With a baffled cry he brought them up again—empty!

"So are mine," he said mournfully. "Fell out with yours, I guess, when I dove through the wall and we both took a header on the ground. Looks like our bad luck's still dogging us, Sam. Well"—he shrugged his shoulders—"we don't dare go back for 'em."

Peters laughed harshly. "I'll say we don't dare to go back. The only thing we can do is set out after those blasted crooks, guns or no guns. How much grub left in the pack sack?"

"Four tins of beef and a chunk of

bread, and"—Cabel laughed dryly—"all our ammunition. Do you think we can overhaul those devils now?"

"We'll overhaul 'em!" Peters ground out furiously between clenched teeth. "We'll follow the Nmai down till opposite the Imawbum country, then cut across to the head of Chimili Pass.

"No matter if they traveled last night without stopping, we'll reach the pass before they do. It's going to be a tough trip, though, lad—and a dangerous one. We've got precious little food, and no guns."

"We should worry!" Cabel spoke up eagerly. "The main thing is to get clear of this outfit we've just given the slip. I'd be willing to hoof it a couple of days without any food at all, just for the privilege of meeting up with our crook friends. Shake a leg, old-timer—I'm r'aring to go!"

Without a word Peters turned and headed down the gully, which presently widened into a valley, from the rim of which they looked down upon a heavily jungled plain.

"That's the Nmai," Peters pointed to the silver ribbon of water, shimmering in the first rays of sun that by now had come rushing over the mountains.

"We'll slip down through this copse and reach it in a couple of hours. And then our work begins in earnest. By the time we've got to Imawbum you'll know what this blasted jungle country actually tastes like."

CHAPTER VII

DARK TRAILING.

IT was a wearied, hungry pair that climbed out of the Nmai gorge just before dusk the second day after fleeing Seniku. From the crest of the wooded spur they had been all afternoon ascending, they gazed into a small, triangular-shaped valley, deep in shadows of the high hills that hemmed it in.

"Kyaw village, the entrance to Chi-

mili Pass," Peters said, pointing to a cluster of huts at the far end of the valley. "That's where our scheming crooks will come off the Hpimaw track. Maybe to-night, but more probably in the morning. I sure wish we had our guns, lad."

"Maybe we can scare up one or two in the village," Cabel suggested hopefully.

"Not a chance. These Lushi back here use crossbows. I doubt if there's a native in the village that ever had a gun in his hands."

"Well," Cabel laughed, "worrying over it now won't do any good. I'm starved. Let's breeze down there and eat. With a full stomach I'll feel more like figuring out some way to put the screws to our friends when they turn up."

Before they had descended the spur halfway, darkness closed in. "As they gained the valley floor, a huge fire suddenly leaped into the sky, revealing a milling throng of natives.

"Humph," Peters remarked. "The 'nats' have been up to some deviltry today. The Lushi build a fire that size for some ceremony."

"Gnats—bugs, you mean?" Cabel asked, puzzled.

"Great Christopher!" Peters grumbled. "Don't tell me you've spent a fortnight in Burma and don't know what nats are. Nats are the countless thousands of good and evil spirits the Burmese think the air is filled with.

"Everything that happens is blamed on the nats. Down by that fire you'll find the Tomba witch priests working their magic to knock the spots out of the evil nats that Lushi credit with engineering some mischief or other."

Upon their arrival at the village, Peters' theory proved unfounded. In an open space at one side of the fire a Chinese trader was displaying his wares, surrounded by the entire village.

The Lushi, too curious and impatient to wait until daylight to barter, had

heaped up their supply of firewood and set it ablaze.

The trader, a tall, sun-coppered old Chinaman in a long, quilted coat, was in the throes of a brisk business when Peters boldly led the way into the throng.

Barter for the moment ceased. Suddenly from somewhere in the gathering the village headman appeared. Apparently he knew Peters, for he came rushing forward, dark face wreathed in smiles. There followed an exchange of bows and talk in native tongue. Then the two moved off. The crowd went back to its buying.

Cabel found himself completely ignored. Unnoticed, he elbowed his way closer to the Chinaman's display. There was nothing of interest in the clutter of tinware, bolts of cheap cloth and odds and ends.

Cabel was about to rejoin Peters and the headman when a small, round tin box, half hidden under a spray of artificial flowers caught his eye. Moving closer he uncovered the box.

An eager expression emerged on Cabel's face when the printing on the lid confirmed his suspicion as to the contents. Pretending to be inspecting the artificial flowers, he pawed around and discovered two more boxes.

The trader, anticipating a sale, shuffled over beside the white man. A crafty expression spread over his wrinkled face when Cabel picked up the three boxes and said: "How much?"

The trader took the boxes and studied each one carefully, squinted his eyes shut, made a hideous grimace. When his countenance re-formed it was grave; but there was a greedy glint in his half-closed eyes. Suddenly he held up four fingers and scowled fiercely, intimating that that was his price and he meant to stick to it.

Cabel hastily dug out a fistful of silver and thrust four rupees into the Chinaman's palm. The old fellow in-

spected each coin closely, bit it, then finally handed over the boxes and turned to harangue a new customer.

Wrapping the boxes in his handkerchief and tucking them into his shirt pocket, Cabel turned to look for Peters. He found him still talking to the headman. The dour look on his face told Cabel he had learned no good news.

"Well, lad," Peters said dejectedly, "our quarry slipped through here about three hours before sundown. It's as I feared about guns. Not a one here. All we can get is food. I guess we'd better eat a bite, then load up and push on.

"There're three white men in the band. They've got four coolies and six animals. Plenty of supplies and no end of guns. Maybe only a fool would start out after 'em, armed as we are, with nothing but a broken knife, but——"

"Yeh?" Cabel interrupted, grinning from ear to ear. "Well, that's where you're wrong. Listen. Can you pry these birds loose from a couple of crossbows and a flock of arrows?"

"I've already bartered for food. I could get bows and arrows, too. But arrows are worthless against guns."

"With the scheme I've got in mind they're not worthless," Cabel retorted confidently. "Wait till we drop a few among our friends. They'll think a young hell has descended into their midst."

Peters' air of dejection suddenly melted. His faded old eyes reflected some of the eagerness blazing in Cabel's face.

"Now what you got cooked up?" he demanded. "By Christopher! Next you'll be telling me you've dug into thin air and produced a dozen guns—and I'll be believing it!"

Cabel laughed. "I only wish I could do that. My idea, though, isn't so bad. We'll give our gang a run for their money when we overtake 'em. When the smoke clears away we'll have their

guns and as much stuff as they caused us to leave behind at Wowsong."

"How are you going to do anything against guns with arrows?" Peters persisted. "The only way I can see is to ambush 'em—and blast 'em if I'll do that, crooks or no crooks!"

"You'll see, all right—later," Cabel laughed. "It won't be murder, either. But come on, let's eat."

TEN minutes later, after bolting the meager supper scraped up by the headman's wife, the two men were plodding along the ridge track that wound around into the pass leading to the wilderness frontier.

"We'll come onto the beggars by midnight," Peters declared confidently, "for they surely halted at dark. We won't show our hand till daylight, though." Then we can watch every move they make. I don't mean to give 'em a chance to hide the map on us."

Peters had prophesied midnight, but it was three o'clock when they sighted the enemy camp. Mounting a steep rise, they saw a small fire about a quarter mile down the gorge, which the pass at this point had narrowed into.

"Must have somebody on guard," Peters declared. "That fire's been fed in the last hour. Easy now, lad. We'll have to work down there quietly and crawl as close to that fire as possible. Our only chance is to take 'em by surprise the second it's light enough to see."

Half an hour later they gained the rocky floor of the gorge. Here all was inky darkness, so dark that huge rocks, invisible at one step, loomed up in feathery outline the next. After he had trailed along for perhaps ten yards Cabel suddenly grasped Peters' arm and drew him back.

"Somebody's behind us, Sam!" Cabel breathed. "Creeping along!"

"Rats!" the old man murmured scoffingly. "It's your imagination."

Cabel closed down on his arm and shook him fiercely. "I tell you there is!" he hissed. "I thought I heard a rock crunch a second or two ago, but I wasn't sure. But just now I heard it again. We've got somebody behind us! Step over here to one side and duck down. You'll see in a minute."

Peters muttered something under his breath, but allowed Cabel to draw him to one side. Cautiously both squatted down. Eyes boring into darkness, ears strained, they waited. Interminable seconds passed, lengthened into a full minute. Not the faintest sound had broken the still night air. The old man stirred restlessly.

"It was only your imagination," Peters insisted.

"I guess so," Cabel agreed. "I haven't heard anything since we stopped. Better move on." He rose and got back into the track.

"Take it easy now," Peters cautioned as he brushed by and got into the lead. "We don't want to betray our presence to whoever's on guard up ahead."

Despite having agreed that he had only imagined hearing sounds behind, Cabel paused at every step to listen. But when he covered some thirty yards and had heard nothing, his suspicions dwindled. He speeded up to close the gap between him and his companion.

With the passing of another twenty yards he caught up. At arm's length ahead he could make out the feathery form of the old man. His fears of some one shadowing them were gone. He was absorbed in trying to make out the recumbent figures in the dim light cast by the fire.

Then, with the suddenness of an electric shock there came the harsh scraping of a dislodged rock at his very heels.

A startled gasp broke from his lips as he pivoted around. His eyes caught a moving shadow a yard in front of him. He lashed out instinctively, but both

hands stabbed only thin air. Something swished.

Before the sound fairly registered upon Cabel's eardrum the snarl of fury that rose to his lips melted into a gurgle of pain. The crashing blow full on top of the head felled him onto his knees.

Dazed, he struggled frantically to gain his feet. Then the very sky seemed to burst into an inferno of red fire and smother his senses.

CHAPTER VIII

A MILLING HORDE.

PETERS had whirled about at Cabel's startled gasp, had heard the club swish the air and thud against bone. He became infuriated when he realized that it was Cabel wilting to the ground. Like a flash he dropped to his knees, hands groping frantically among the rocks.

As Cabel came bobbing up under the first blow the old man straightened up, fingers wrapped around a stone as large as a brick.

At that instant the club swished a second time. Again Cabel sank. An anguished cry escaped Peters. His arm snapped back, and he hurled the rock at the swaying shadow a scant two yards away.

His exultant gasp blended with the crushing impact and the groan of the man that crumpled noisily in the loose rocks. With the fury of a tiger the old man dove headlong.

His clawing fingers dug into a naked body, slid on up and circled a thin, bony neck with the strength of a maniac. Needless precaution. There was not a twitch in the form he straddled.

It was not this discovery that made Peters abandon his grip. It was an unearthly outburst of howling and yelping that suddenly shattered the stillness.

Whirling, he saw in the eerie, yellow firelight a milling horde of savages.

Peters stiffened, for a moment poised rigid as an iron rod. But his brain was a turmoil of desperate thought.

Suddenly the howling chorus softened into an ominous murmur. One glistening, black native snatched a burning brand out of the fire, then headed straight down the track toward Peters, the band at his heels.

The old man flashed into action. Endowed in this moment of peril with the strength of two, he hoisted Cabel onto his shoulder and staggered away.

The thunder of the yowling horde pounded louder and louder in his ears, but he dared not pause to look behind. Every yard traversed was precious. He had to gain the foot of the slope before they came to their smitten tribesman, had to get at least halfway to the top during the time they halted.

Just as he struck the bracken-covered slope a blood-curdling wail went up. A harsh laugh hissed between Peters' clenched teeth as he paused to shift his burden onto the other shoulder. Flashing a look back he made out a huddled mass in the faint light of the firebrand. Then he crouched low and attacked the hill.

Twenty feet up his foot slipped and he went down. Cursing savagely he wriggled from under his leadlike burden, got his footing, and slung Cabel onto his shoulder again.

Fifty feet more and the slippery grass spilled him again. He was up instantly, braced to hoist Cabel off the ground. He got him halfway up, then lost his footing a third time.

Once more he planted his feet far apart and grasped the unconscious man. An angry sob left him. He hadn't the strength left to carry on. There was no alternative but to rest.

Plunged in despair, Peters sank to his knees. Before he was ready to go on, the enraged mob below would surely discover where he had broken through the thick barrier of ferns; would fol-

low the trail he had torn. Unwillingly he let his eyes travel downward.

Wild hope leaped into him. The savages were racing back to the fire, led by the torchbearer. Arriving there, all seemed to dive into the blaze at once. Two minutes later the fifty-odd warriors dotted the rocky flat with their yellow firebrands.

Peters heaved a great sigh. It would be five minutes, at least, before the flat was explored and found unoccupied. Five more would pass before the pursuers huddled in conference and decided to extend search to the slope. In all that time he could rest himself completely, and be on top of the ridge.

A moment or two later, Peters started climbing. He went slower now, making sure of each step, resting at short intervals. Presently the stiff incline lifted to almost level. Tired, but heartened at relief from the upward pull, he staggered over the last hundred feet without a halt.

"Now, you blasted black devils!" Peters spat out exultantly, "hunt to your hearts' content. We're on level ground. I can move with both of us faster than you nose along with your torches."

With Cabel stretched out beside him, Peters sat watching the bobbing lights far below. Until the savages abandoned the flat for the slope he meant to remain where he was, resting.

Before that moment came, however, Cabel showed signs of returning consciousness. By the time the hunters were fairly started up the incline he was on his feet.

Some minutes later, sitting in a brush thicket high on a ridge that skirted the track farther down, he was listening to Peters' brief account of what had happened.

"Well, if that ain't the ticket!" Cabel exclaimed. "What we figured was the crooks' camp really was a nest of your pet Lissus."

"It was the crooks' camp all right," Peters replied grimly. "But the Lissus wiped 'em out last night. Here's how I've got the thing figured out:

"This stretch of gorge must be visible from the backbone that overlooks the Salwin. These black Lissus, scouting around up there last night caught sight of the fire down here.

"This is quite a ways outside their hunting grounds, but they couldn't overlook the chance to plunder a caravan. So they stole down and murdered every man in the camp while he slept.

"They're a lazy lot, like all the Salwin tribes, so they proceeded to finish the night here, figuring to hit for home with their loot at daylight.

"The beggar that bashed you must have been a sentinel stationed at the entrance to the gorge. He let us slip by without sounding a warning, figuring to settle our hash by himself. Then he'd have stripped us clean, hidden our bodies and kept the matter secret from his mates.

"Well"—Peters sighed deeply; there was a pause before he continued. "It was sure rough on those poor devils, crooks though they were. But it's just as rough on us. That treasure's slipped through our fingers for keeps, now.

"The only thing that could put us back in the running is guns. We could drop back onto the slope and route the Lissus. Send 'em stampeding for home in the dark."

"What's the sense of that?" Cabel demanded. "They'll clear out in the morning. They won't be in our road. I agree it was tough for those other fellows, but the Lissus have saved us a battle."

"The Lissus will clear out in the morning, all right," Peters said soberly. "After they've collected every blasted thing in sight, including the clothes from the men they've killed. In some of them clothes will be the map."

"By gosh! I'd clean forgot the map,"

Cabel ejaculated. "You're right. We will have to send 'em packing out of the gorge empty-handed. When they've given up looking for us we'll turn the trick.

"Probably they'll bunch up around the fire and go to sleep again. It's lucky my crossbow and quiver of arrows didn't get lost in the shuffle. Then we would have been in a pretty pickle."

Peters gave a contemptuous little laugh. "Why, we haven't got arrows enough even to annoy the blighters. What it would take is guns and plenty of shells. Rake their end of the flat with lead for two or three minutes."

"Ho! ho! ho!" Cabel laughed boisterously. "Fold up your downheartedness and stick it in your pocket. Then I'll let you in on a little secret. Listen: I've got three full boxes of dynamite caps. Found 'em in that chink trader's collection of junk. Arrows, and dynamite caps. Get the idea?"

Peters strove to take the startling disclosure calmly, but he was unable to conceal the emotion in his voice. "Lord love you, lad!" he almost sobbed. "Why, *nothing* can stop us now. We don't need guns.

"A dozen arrows tipped with caps will scatter those black devils like a thousand evil nats were after 'em. They'll fly for the Salwin without stopping."

"Well, let's hop to it, then," Cabel spoke up eagerly. "Where's that old knife? I'll get busy loading this bunch of arrows."

Loading the arrows proved a simple task, even in the dark. Slashing off the thong-bound stone tip, Cabel sharpened the blunt end of the bamboo shaft until it fit snugly into the hollow end of the tubelike cap.

Within an hour their hundred-odd arrows were fitted with the deadly, powerful caps, and restored carefully to the quiver. Cabel handed Peters the crossbow. "As long as you lost

yours," he said, "you better handle this one. I don't know the first thing about one of 'em. I'll be your powder monkey and pass out the arrows for you to shoot."

Ten minutes later they mounted the ridge overlooking the gorge. A fire twice the size of the first one was burning.

"Look at the black babies powwowing around the fire!" Cabel exclaimed eagerly. "Let's hurry up and get down there close enough to bombard 'em, before they decide to call it a night and scatter out to sleep."

CHAPTER IX

STRANGE WEAPONS.

FITTING an arrow into the crossbow, Peters plunged boldly down the slope.

"Hey! Take it easy!" Cabel protested. "They'll hear us before we're ready."

"Let 'em!" the old man retorted contemptuously. "We needn't fear a rush now. A dozen arrows would turn back an army of the devils. You stick close with that quiver, and have arrows ready for me."

For the first time since the loss of the map Peters really had shaken off his depression. Now he was alert, brimming over with courage. It gladdened Cabel's heart to see him so.

Cabel chuckled as he contrasted their previous descent with now. Then Peters could not creep along quietly enough; now he charged downhill utterly indifferent to noise.

And yet, to Cabel's wonder, they gained the stony flat without disturbing the enemy. Peters only laughed when he remarked on it.

"Just the way luck runs," the old man declared. "Had our life depended on getting down here undiscovered, we probably couldn't have come quietly enough."

"Not caring whether we stirred 'em up or not, though, we made as much noise as an elephant and nobody noticed it. But they'll know we're here pretty blamed soon, you can bet!"

Peters suddenly raised the crossbow and the cord twanged musically. There followed a tense wait as the arrow whizzed down the gorge.

A blotch of red flame showed where it struck, several yards short of the jabbering, howling Lissus. Then the narrow gorge took up the explosion. Sent it crashing from wall to wall like a volley of thunder.

Two more arrows Peters launched in quick succession. Then he paused, a jeering cry on his lips.

At the first explosion the milling horde suddenly hushed, stood stiff and motionless, like an array of wooden posts. The second cap burst a scant ten feet from the fire, transmuted the dumb, stiffened mass into a shrieking, wailing huddle. Then the third miniature bombshell shattered still nearer.

As if the force of the explosion scattered them, so they separated in all directions, yelling and screeching in terror.

"We've got 'em going! A couple of shots way this side of the fire now!" Cabel shouted excitedly. "Drive those back that dove in the rocks out this direction. Might as well send the whole pack high-tailing it for home together. Atta boy, Sam!"

Two spatters of angry flame, one right after the other, midway of the fire produced a chorus of wild howls. An instant later several black shapes streaked through the area of firelight and melted into the darkness beyond.

Peters looped three more arrows far on the other side of the fire, but refused the fourth Cabel urged upon him.

"No use wasting ammunition," he said. "The blacks are almost out of hearing. They won't stop now till they reach the Salwin."

"If this brush hasn't satisfied your craving for action, don't worry. Before long we'll be right in their bailiwick. Like as not you'll see more of the treacherous devils than you wish for."

"Yeh, I'll be scared to death," Cabel retorted sarcastically.

"You haven't got sense enough to be scared, blast you!" Peters shot back; but his tone carried far more admiration than censure.

"Maybe I haven't," Cabel replied; "but anyway, I'm happy. Come on, let's toddle up to the camp. I'm anxious to get that map back into the family."

"No; we'll stay here till daylight. It's barely possible there's a Lissu or so still in bowshot of that fire. Curled up under a rock, too scared to have fled with the others. Maybe wounded by one of those devilish caps.

"If we walked up there in the light it would be easy to plug us with an arrow. Day will break in another hour. We can't do much till then, anyway."

TO the impatient Cabel the wait until dawn seemed a week. At last trees and rocks and mountaintops began to take nebulous form. Presently broad daylight revealed the canyon floor. The immediate vicinity of the fire presented a gruesome sight when they drew up.

Cabel, big, bluff, indifferent as he was to danger, shuddered and turned away at the first glance.

Invading the sleeping camp the savage marauders had meted out death silently, swiftly.

A few yards back from the fire lay the three white men, just as they had crawled between their blankets the night before. Sharp knives had settled their fate as they slept.

Farther back, huddled in a welter of crimson, were the mulemen and porters, despatched in the same manner. Even the pack mules had been killed.

To complete the ghastly picture, rifled boxes and bales and packs were strewn broadcast. Their contents, done up into small packs, lay in a huge heap.

Scattered around were war and hunting bows of every description, loose arrows, and quivers filled with arrows, abandoned by the Lissus in their frenzied flight.

Cabel, composed now, stood gazing upon the scene of carnage with mingled feeling of rage and horror. Suddenly an exclamation brought him wheeling about. Peters was pawing the smoldering fire with his foot.

"No wonder there wasn't a sign of a gun anywhere!" Peters pointed to the remains of several carbines and pistols in the smoldering fire. "Oh, they're cunning, the black whelps. Some of this bunch evidently have had a taste of gunfire.

"Not knowing how to use guns themselves, they took care that nobody who did know how would ever get this collection. Well, that knocks our gun hopes into a cocked hat."

"Oh, we're not so bad off," Cabel assured. "I've got two full boxes of caps left, and there're almost a hundred loaded arrows. I don't know but the cap idea beats guns, anyway."

"Just the same," Peters said ruefully, "we could have used a brace of carbines and pistols apiece. We're denied 'em, though, so you better gather up some arrows and pick out a bow for yourself. Meanwhile I'll be sorting out what supplies we can take along."

"Say, what about the map?" Cabel reminded.

"I'd forgotten it—blast me if I hadn't!" Peters confessed. "It must be on one of these bodies."

Cabel stood back, grimly watching Peters swiftly search the pockets of the murdered men. At the end of a tense minute the old man bobbed up. He held the leather wallet Cabel had

seen that night at Myitkina. Assuring himself the map was inside, Peters thrust the wallet into his shirt and joined Cabel.

"Know any of them?" Cabel asked.

Peters shook his head. "Must have all drifted into Myitkina while I was gone this last time. Not a paper on any of 'em, either, to tell who they are.

"Well, better see to your arrows, lad. It's a sad piece of business but we can't let it plunge us into the dumps. We can't help the poor devils now. The sooner we get squared around and out of here the better."

In five minutes Cabel gathered and tied up arrows sufficient to mount the caps on hand, and had selected a light, sturdy bow. Then he joined in the task of undoing the packages the raiders had prepared to make off with. Presently he encountered one unusually heavy. In it were several hundred cartridges.

"I guess the bird that saved these didn't know what they were," Cabel remarked. "Well, we sure don't want 'em"—kicking the package aside.

A moment later Peters uncovered a pocket kit containing a knife, small pliers and several other appliances. "We can use the knife," he declared eagerly, and discarded the remainder.

"Say!" Cabel spoke up suddenly, "those pliers give me an idea. Why not open that mess of cartridges and get the powder?"

"By Christopher!" Peters ejaculated. "I saw those shells. The pliers, too. But I never thought about getting the powder out. Of course we want it. That inventive mind of yours will rig up some scheme to use the powder to advantage. Open the shells. I'll finish this."

Two hours later the last pinch of powder was added to the nearly two pounds already accumulated. Peters had ready everything they were to take. Only one task remained undone.

We can't leave these men here exposed to the vultures," Peters said soberly. "We have no way to make a grave; but there are plenty of rocks. We can build a cairn over their bodies."

This unpleasant task at length completed, they turned their backs upon the fateful spot and hurriedly made their way out of the gorge.

CHAPTER X

CRASHING GATES.

ALL morning Cabel and the old man followed the pass through the unending succession of gaunt, naked hills. Early afternoon found the walls growing lower and farther apart. A mile farther on the track emerged onto the crown of a great, low hill.

To Cabel's surprise the old man turned abruptly off the track and struck off along the ridge.

"The trail from here leads into Chonru village," said Peters, explaining his change in the course as they headed toward a heavily wooded ravine. "I don't trust the headman. Maybe it's only rumor, but I've heard it said he's friendly with the Lissus."

"I thought the Lutzu were friendly," Cabel said, surprised.

"Oh, they wouldn't show us any fight if we went down there," Peters assured. "But I'm giving them no chance to despatch a runner to warn the Lissus of a couple of whites traveling upriver."

"Going this way we'll hit the Salwin a few miles above the village. Then we can snatch a few hours' rest till dark."

"You don't intend pushing into those devils' hangout in the dark, do you?" Cabel demanded.

"You better believe it. Night is the only time we'll get through the gap in the cliffs that wall up the Lissu valley. In daylight we'd need steel armor to ward off a cloudburst of arrows from the heights."

"Say!" Cabel exclaimed suspiciously. "I believe you've been in there yourself. You seem to know plenty about the place."

Peters smiled. "I've been up the Salwin to the entrance of the valley," he said. "But I never ventured in. I had no reason too, then."

"Too, I've heard Parker, one of the few men that did go in and come out again, relate some of his experiences. That's how I happen to know the beggars maintain a guard atop the cliffs on both sides of the defile."

"The first time Parker tried to go in was in daylight. All but four of his party got wiped out. Next time he tried at night. He got through, all right. But I want to tell you he had plenty of hell on his hands during the three or four days he stayed in the valley."

"Our play is to slip into the valley unnoticed. Once we're in we should be able to keep out of their sight. A couple of days and I can trace this map out, unless it's a blamed sight more complicated than I think it is."

By now they had passed off the level. Further discussion gave way to the careful attention needed in descending the steep, treacherous ravine.

Arrival on the river bank an hour later found both men with but one thought in mind: sleep to replace that lost the previous night. Half an hour later they lay dead to the world in a dense canebrake overlooking the river.

Cabel, wearier by far than he would admit upon sprawling out on the mossy ground, would have slept on through the night. The old frontiersman, however, was astir at dusk.

Bolting a cold supper of tinned meat and stale, crumbly biscuit, the two men shouldered their loads and pressed on. Darkness closed in before they traveled far. But the great river, low in its banks now, was a guide easy to follow, black as the night was.

For the next two hours the going

was easy. Then the river valley pinched out abruptly. It became a mere fissure between walls that seemed to reach straight up to the narrow ribbon of sky.

Nearly three hours elapsed in feeling the way along a scant mile of narrow trail that clung to the sheer, winding wall, high above the roaring torrent. Finally, this dangerous stretch accomplished, the men fought their way through a succession of scrub-matted spurs and emerged onto the floor of another river valley.

"Whew! I'm glad that's over with," Cabel sighed, as he dropped on grassy tuft, dug out a cigarette and scratched a match.

Hardly had the tiny jet of flame stabbed the inky darkness than Peters sent the match flying out of Cabel's fingers.

"Great Christopher!" he stormed. "Didn't I just finish telling you the entrance is in that cliff right across from here? You might just as well set off that can of powder as to light a match now."

"Oh, you and your super-caution!" Cabel flared up, startled by Peters' sudden, unexpected move. "Those birds may have a guard in the day; but not at night. Imagine them fearing anybody would come over that dizzy rabbit trail along the canyon wall after dark!"

"Maybe they haven't at night. But we don't know they haven't—blast your stubborn hide!" Peters fairly screeched. "If it wasn't I feared the black devils would snuff you out, I'd like to see you run afoul of about twenty of 'em."

"By Christopher! You'd lose the edge off that cockiness you're filled with. Come along, now. And step like you was treading barefoot on sharp nails!"

Amused at the old man's vehemence; a trifle ashamed, as well, for his own irate outburst, Cabel held his tongue.

Ten minutes later they gained the

towering wall across the valley. Presently, on rounding a huge outcropping, the gateway into the Lissu valley loomed before their eyes.

Pausing for a last whispered plea to Cabel to "take it easy, now," Peters moved on.

The floor of the defile was flat and free of bothersome rock fragments, and for several hundred feet ran wide. Then, the cliffs began to squeeze together. In the course of a hundred yards the gap dwindled to a width of fifteen feet.

Cabel was in an airy mood, sure that the place was unguarded. He thought of Peters plodding along several feet ahead, tense, alert for the faintest sound. He couldn't restrain a little gulp of laughter.

The sound, amplified fourfold in the narrow inclosure brought Peters whirling around to grasp Cabel's arm furiously. "You blasted idiot," he demanded. "What's to laugh at?"

"You. The way you're pussy footing along, with nobody probably in five miles of here—and fast asleep, wherever they are."

"We haven't got clear through yet," Peters snapped back. "There's still a chance to run onto the devils."

Another fifty yards were covered stealthily. Cabel, absorbed now in conjuring up in his mind visions of the valley they would soon pass into, suddenly returned to earth as Peters let out a gasp of surprise, alarm.

Then, before even the foot thrust out in front of him touched the ground, a terrific crash came right behind Cabel. A split-second later there came another out in front.

"Now what the hell!" Cabel blurted out, startled, but less so than he was chagrined at this obvious disapproval of his contention that their nearest enemy was at least five miles away. "What was it?" he asked, moving up beside Peters. "Rocks rolled down?"

"Didn't sound like rocks," Peters replied, puzzled. "I ran against a cord stretched across the path and tripped the trigger that set the blasted contraption loose."

"Oh! A deadfall," Cabel declared confidently.

"No, I don't think it was. Something hit in front of us and behind us. A deadfall would have fell directly on our heads."

"That's all right," Cabel argued. "It wasn't timed right."

"It *was* timed right," Peters corrected sharply. "To a gnat's eye. The instant I bumped the string both crashes came. Well, I'll blame soon find out what came down. You stay here. One man moving at a time is enough."

Five tense seconds Cabel stood rooted in his tracks. Then, about ready to disregard the warning, a muttered oath from Peters sent him bounding forward.

CHAPTER XI

OMINOUS CHANTING.

WHAT is it, Sam?" Cabel cried anxiously.

Before Peters could answer Cabel's outthrust hand had told what he wanted to know.

"For the love of Mike!" he exclaimed. "A wooden wall!"

"Built out of two-foot logs and fitted together like a hardwood floor," Peters added dolefully. "And one like it behind us."

"Well, can you beat that!" was all Cabel could think to say.

Peters, absorbed in a careful examination of the wall, was silent for some time.

"By thunder!" he declared finally, "now we *are* in a tight hole. These blasted walls slide up and down in grooves sculpted in the cliffs on either side. Without a ladder, we're trapped like rats in a deep tin."

Cabel laughed softly. "I never saw a rat in a deep tin," he said. "I'll bet seven hundred dollars, though, that we're not staying in here to play targets for your Lissu friends. Let's get the old thinking machinery wound up."

"By Christopher, we'd better! But I'm blessed if I can think of a way out, right on the instant. We can't scale the cliff walls, nor these gates, either. The blamed things are thirty feet high. And they're too heavy to lift up, even if we could get under 'em. The floor here is solid rock. That means no digging under."

"We've got a good knife now," Cabel spoke up hopefully. "May——"

"These logs are coffin juniper," Peters interrupted. "Hard as mahogany. And they're two feet thick. We haven't got all summer to chip a hole through. The blasted stuff won't burn, either. Fire only makes it that much harder."

"Wait a minute!" Cabel protested laughingly. "Pretty quick you'll have us dead and buried, with your calamity howling. Instead of thinking about all the things we can't do, why didn't you remember the can of gunpowder?"

"With what will we make a hole in the log to plant a charge?" Peters rejoined. "A knife wouldn't do it in a week. And exploding the can alongside the gate would do no good."

"How do you know those logs are juniper?" Cabel demanded in a new burst of hope. "You only felt 'em in the dark."

"The odor. The place fairly reeks with it. Can't you smell it?"

"Yes—now," Cabel replied soberly. "Smells like cedar to me, though. Maybe you're wrong after all. Give me the knife."

In the next five minutes Cabel had tested every log in both massive gates.

"Like iron," he admitted on returning to where Peters sat.

"We're in trouble this time, and no

mistake about it," the old man said bitterly. "It's hell to get this far and——"

"Oh, we're not sunk yet!" Cabel affected a flare-up of confidence he by no means felt. "Let's settle down to some real thinking."

"It'll be four or five hours before the Lissus show up to see what sprang their trap. By then we ought to figure some way out. I'm going to make a torch and have a good look around. There's no danger of a light now. Nobody was watching here or the crash would have brought 'em before this."

"Go ahead," Peters assented glumly. "But you won't——"

The old man's words ended abruptly in a startled gasp. Out of the still night had come a weird, chantlike murmur. It grew louder with each passing second.

"The blacks!" Cabel ejaculated. "Must have had a guard here after all. Well, they've trapped what they didn't bargain for. They may bump us off, but not before we bowl a flock of 'em over. Here, take this bunch of capped arrows. I'll tip some more."

By the time Cabel had attached caps to a dozen shafts the murmur had grown to an angry rumble. Then suddenly a torch appeared on the cliff, about fifty feet above the trap. A moment later three more loomed up.

With an oath, Cabel dropped the arrow he was working on and reached for his bow. "So that's the idea, eh?" he grated savagely. "Park up there and swamp us. Well, old boys, we'll give you a run for your money. How does this strike you?"

"Don't! Don't!" Peters commanded huskily snatching the drawn bow 'out of Cabel's hand. "Don't you hear that mob outside the gate? Great Christopher! lad, we've a fighting chance for our lives—and you want to throw it away!"

"Sure I hear 'em!" Cabel snapped. "They're waiting in line to climb up to

where those birds with the lights are. Gimme that bow!"

"You blasted idiot!" Peters hissed. "Listen to me! That handful of men on the cliff are there to work the contrivance that lifts these gates. Shoot up there now and you'll spoil everything."

"The mob outside has built a fire—see them sparks curling up there a hundred feet high? Pretty quick the devils will drop back into the shadows and give the signal to raise the gate. They don't suspect they've trapped human game."

"What they expect to be shooting at when the gate raises and the fire lights this place is animals—lions or tigers. They've rigged up this thing so they can hunt without danger. The beasts can't scale the three walls, and they won't run through that fire out front. The Lissus stand back in the dark and slaughter 'em."

"They'll slaughter us, too!" Cabel cried. "The thing to do is keep that gate down. Let me have my bow. Quick, before they start hoisting the gate."

"Let the gate tenders alone!" Peters hissed. "We want them to hoist the gate. That's our only chance to get out. If we're here in the morning, they'll climb clear to the top of the cliffs, higher than we can loft an arrow, and take their time picking us off. Now, listen to me, will you?"

"I've a plan. The gate goes up; but they won't have a chance to plug us. The fire won't shine in here enough to reveal us until the gate lifts at least four feet from the floor. And the devils on the cliff can't see us either, till there's light."

"We'll stretch out here on the floor. When the gate raises a foot we'll drive three or four arrows into the fire—scatter the blasted thing all to nothing. Then out we'll go into the dark. The second we slide under the gate we'll

give the beggars hell. And, believe me, plenty of it!"

"By gosh!" Cabel cried, elated. "I'd never have thought of that. And the best part is, we can drive the heathens down the canyon ahead of us, and get into the valley. Come on, let's spread ourselves out. I don't hear the blackies jabbering out there now."

Soon after they had stretched out on the floor, a shrill cry rent the air. Ten seconds later a thin line of light showed under the gate. Inch by inch the gap widened. At last it was a foot high.

"Room enough now to crawl under!" Peters whispered. "Shoot!"

A split-second apart two copper-dosed shafts streaked under the gate. The leaping, dancing flames burst into a spectacular fountain of sparks, and red-glowing brands, and crumbling embers.

Letting out an exultant yelp, Peters started for the gate on all fours, Cabel at his heels. The wisp of a Peters glided through the foot-high aperture with room to spare. He was outside, tugging furiously at Cabel's arm, the instant Cabel thrust his head through.

"Hurry up! Hurry up!" the old man demanded, shrieking at the top of his voice to make himself heard above the pandemonium of howls and wails of terror that by now had turned the defile into a thunder box.

Finally Cabel dragged himself clear and got to his feet. Peters still clinging to his coat sleeve.

"This way!" the old man shouted, urging him toward the wall on the left. "They're huddled on the other side like a flock of sheep. Now's our chance to slip by."

Hugging close to the smooth, granite wall, the adventurous pair moved swiftly along. Presently the lessening of the din indicated they had left the panic-ridden Lissus behind. Cabel suddenly reached ahead and drew Peters to a stop.

"Let's bust a couple more into 'em," he said.

The old man pulled away savagely. "Come on!" he snapped. "Why do you think I sneaked past? Just to get in the clear and advertise the fact? We want to get down into the valley and lose ourselves in the brush. They didn't know we got by. We'll keep 'em guessing as long as we can."

Cabel moved on at Peters' repeated injunction. Five minutes later they rounded a bend that closed off all sound from back by the gates.

Soon the defile widened. The pungent scent of the jungle filled the air. A hundred yards farther on, the towering walls turned at a right-angle. The trail dipped over a grassy knoll and plunged into the pitch-black forest.

"Well, by Christopher!" Peters exclaimed, "we're in the valley at last."

"Got any idea which way we go from here?" Cabel asked.

"If we mind the map we follow this right wall a ways. Then the trail turns off. I doubt if we can locate the turn-off in the dark, though. We won't follow the cliffs far now. Just far enough to get out of sight of this place. Then we'll lay up till dawn."

"What did you say about a trail along this right-hand wall?" Cabel asked. "Why, the blamed brush and bamboo grow so close to the rock a rat couldn't squeeze through. Get out the old knife, Sam. If we go through here we cut through."

"I guess we'll have to," Peters admitted ruefully, after a hasty inspection. "Cutting a hole here will be a dead give-away; but we'll have to take a chance. Here goes!"

In five minutes Peters had slashed an opening in the matted wall large enough to squeeze through. Then, pulling the displaced brush and vines back into place as best they could, the two men started beating deeper into the dense jungle forest.

CHAPTER XII.

NATIVE WITCH PRIESTS.

FOR nearly an hour Cabel and the old man hacked and slashed their way along the winding cliffs. Presently, on coming abruptly around a bulge in the rock wall, they found themselves staring out of the inky darkness into a brilliantly lighted semicircular clearing that indented the cliff base.

In the center, surrounded by torches planted so closely together as to form an unbroken ring of fire, stood a stone pedestal. It was eight or ten feet high and about twenty square.

Up the side facing the precipice led a wide flight of stairs. Occupying the four corners were huge, blue, squatting Buddhas, supporting on their heads an elaborately festooned canopy.

Before each Buddha stood a small altar of the same blue color. On its top a gold incense salver sent up a thin spiral of smoke.

Squatted Buddha-fashion at the head of the stairs was a fat hulk of a figure swathed in a bright-yellow robe. On his huge, shaved head perched a high, peaked cap, surmounted by a topknot, in which an enormous ruby jewel sparkled like crimson fire. In one hand he held a short gold-handled sword. In the other, a highly polished human skull.

Midway up the stairs, hands and feet bound, but supported by a gaudy-robed figure on either side of her, was a Chinese girl. Three steps lower down, poised with folded arms, motionless as the blue Buddhas, stood three other robed figures with peaked, ruby-jeweled caps.

"Great Christopher!" cried Peters clutching at Cabel's arm excitedly. "That must be Wong Tan's daughter!"

"Who the devil is Wong Tan's daughter?" was Cabel's puzzled reply. "And what's she doing, marrying one of those heathens?"

"Don't you see she's tied?" Peters demanded impatiently. "Those devils are Lissu *tongpas*—witch priests. They're bent on sacrificing her in some blasted devil-banishing experiment."

"How did a Chinese girl get in their hands?" Cabel persisted.

"Keep still!" Peters whispered. "I can't stop to explain now. We've got to save her from these murdering devils."

"That won't be hard!" Cabel declared eagerly. "I'll bounce an arrow off Yellow-coat's big dome. Then the others will drop her and run—quick."

"Wait! This *tongpa* shrine can't be far from the village. We don't want to kick up a fuss that will bring the whole populace down on our ears. We've got to do it without noise, if possible."

"Rush 'em?"

"Yes; but not now. I think this ceremony is the same I've heard Parker tell about seeing. If it is——"

At that instant the *tongpa* in yellow suddenly brought the sword and skull together with a weird, hollow crash. Peters pressed Cabel's arm fiercely.

"It is!" he whispered. "Watch now! Don't move till I tell you!"

At the crash of skull and steel the motionless *tongpas* below came to life. The girl, screaming in terror, was lifted and carried up the stairs.

Released from the spell that held him, fascinated, behind the tangled screen of brush, Cabel suddenly shot erect.

"Wait!" Peters said, clutching frantically to hold him back.

Cabel tore free and plunged with lowered head against the matted barrier.

The yellow-robed figure raised his bowed head at the sound of the crash, revealing a hideous, black face, with flabby cheeks that sagged almost to the corners of his mouth. Letting out an angry growl he sprang to his feet with a suddenness that belied his great bulk. Sword and skull dropped from his

pudgy hands and went clattering down the steps.

The next instant Cabel tore completely through the jungle wall and landed on hands and knees within the area of torchlight. Like a flash he got to his feet again and came charging on.

Ten strides carried him within a yard of the foot of the stairs.

A piercing wail broke from the *tongpa's* sagging lips. The five witch priests huddled at his side with the girl still held aloft, suddenly moved behind him. The next instant they seemed to sink through the stone floor.

Cabel landed on the first stair, then sprang upward.

Another shriek broke from the *tongpa's* lips. His right hand became a blur that shot into the front of his robe.

A gleaming dagger flashed out of the silken folds, whipped back, then swished through the air.

Cabel flung up his hands as the deadly blade fanned his cheek. He swayed for a moment, all but toppling backward. Then he regained his balance and came on, hands raised, fists clenched so tightly the knuckles shone like ivory spots.

Clearing the top, an angry cry escaped him. Cabel was just in time to see the *tongpa's* jeweled head vanish below the floor level.

Cabel gave a mighty leap, but was an instant too late. He landed squarely upon the massive stone slab that had returned to place in the opening through which the *tongpas* had descended into the bowels of the shrine.

With a baffled curse, Cabel whirled about. Charging up the steps was Peters, a stream of oaths on his lips.

"Blast you!" he cried. "Why didn't you wait?"

"How the devil did I know they'd drop through a hole and pull the hole in after 'em?" Cabel retorted hotly. "I suppose I should have stood back like

a dummy—waited till the heathens started taking the girl to pieces with their knives!"

"They weren't ready to harm her—nowheres near ready!" Peters fairly screeched. "I told you I knew what was happening. In a minute she'd have been laid on the floor under an altar. Then the five subordinate priests would have gone down inside."

"Their job is to set up an infernal racket with drums and songs. It would have been at least five minutes before Yellow-coat went through his devil dance and contortions and started working on her."

"With the noise of the drums going on we could have slipped out unnoticed. Been right on top of him. But you had to crash through like a bull elephant."

"I'm sorry," Cabel replied soberly. "But dog-gone it, Sam, I just couldn't help busting out. That big devil sitting there with a sword in one hand and a skull in the other sort of hypnotized me. Made cold chills run up my back. I was scared to death that he'd jump up and murder the girl."

"Well, you should have waited till I gave the word to go," Peters growled. He turned and walked down the steps, Cabel trailing after.

"We haven't lost yet, Sam," Cabel said hopefully. "The devils won't be apt to kill her, as long as we have 'em penned up in there."

"Penned up!" Peters scoffed. "Why, that place has a secret passage leading out somewhere underground. I'd stake my life on it. But even if they were in there we couldn't get in."

"But we've got to do something!" Cabel protested. "We can't let that poor little chink girl die on account of my boner. Do you suppose they've lugged her back to the village?"

"Like as not. But, great Christopher, we don't dare storm the village, even if we knew right where to look for it.

We'd get ambushed sure as sin. The best thing we can do is clear out of here."

"It may not be far to the village. Right now the *tongpas* may be there, gathering together a pack of bowmen to sneak back and pick us off if we should happen to be here."

Cabel was thoughtful for a spell. "By gosh!" he declared finally, "I can't get the thought out of my noodle that you're wrong about this shrine having an underground passage. If there was a way to get in underneath what's the idea of the stairs? I'm gonna see if I can hear anything through the walls."

"Don't be a blasted fool!" Peters called after him as he swung around the corner of the stairs. "You couldn't hear a cannon through those thick walls."

Cabel paid no heed, and the old man trailed grumbly after him. At the corner of the pedestal he halted and stood watching.

Presently Cabel abandoned the side wall and moved around behind. Hardly had he disappeared, when a wild shout drifted back to Peters.

A terrible fear pounding in his heart, the old man dashed forward. On rounding the corner he drew up. A great sigh of relief forced through his tight lips.

Cabel stood pointing triumphantly to a yawning square aperture in the stone wall. "There's your old underground passage!" he addressed Peters in a caustic tone. "Oh, what saps we are! Standing out there gabbing like two old women and let the blacks slip out the back door on us."

"If we'd only had sense enough to look around before we quit cold. We'd have caught 'em coming out. Saved the chink girl after all. It's too late now, though. I suppose we better be moving before they do come back and make sieves out of us."

Cabel turned and started away. But

after three or four steps he faltered. "Might be a good idea to give the inside the once-over," he said, turning and coming back. "Evidently they left in a panic, or they'd have closed that trick door behind 'em. And that being the case, they might have left the girl in there. Grab a torch, Sam. We'll have a look."

Without waiting for Peters to light the way in with the torch, Cabel darted through the opening. The next thing he knew he landed in a heap on hard stone, five feet below the ground outside.

"Look out!" he shouted a warning as he scrambled up. Peters, however, had discovered the drop-off and was letting himself down carefully.

"Thought I'd jumped off a precipice when I stepped into thin air," Cabel rattled on as he got up and reached for the torch. "What do you suppose the devils ever dug a cellar in here for?"

"How should I know?" Peters rejoined, irritably relinquishing the torch. "Hurry up. I don't fancy being in here when the Lissus come sneaking back. And the bl——" His speech suddenly melted into a gasp of alarm as a creaking sound came from behind.

Whirling, he discovered the hole in the wall had shrunk to a mere crack. The next instant the crack, too, faded into darkness.

"For Pete's sake!" Cabel ejaculated. "What the devil!"

"Nothing," Peters spoke up grimly. "We just stepped into a trap, that's all. And the blacks rolled the door shut on us. But you *would* look around!"

CHAPTER XIII.

HOLY TREASURE.

AN incredulous "Aw," was Cabel's response to Peters' suggestion that they had blundered into a trap. A few seconds later a grim look cropped out on his face, his jaw sagged perceptibly.

"By gosh!" Cabel said, stepping back from inspecting the wall. "It looks like we've waded in over our heads again. The chunk of wall that disappeared to let us in has gone back into place like a drop of water in the ocean. We've got to find the spring or lever that opens the blame thing. If we don't we're out of luck."

Their view of the interior, until now, had been limited to the scope of light of the smudgy torch, an area about ten feet square. A surprise greeted Cabel as he stepped out of this area. Stretched out on the floor was the Chinese girl.

"I told you she might be here!" he cried eagerly dropping beside her. "Hand me the knife, quick!"

A few slashes freed her, but she showed no signs of life.

"Fainted," Peters said. "I'll lay her back by the wall. She'll come to presently."

Again Cabel moved forward, the torchlight stabbing deeper and deeper into the gloom. Suddenly he drew up. A little cry of wonder escaped him. He stood wide-eyed, drinking in the amazing sight the torchlight had reached out and disclosed to view.

Against the front wall stood a miniature duplicate of the shrine,—stone base, steps, blue Buddhas and altars, even the elaborate canopy.

A foot or two back from the head of the stairs stood a bulky object, veiled with a bright-blue silk covering.

"Great Christopher!" Peters cried as he came bounding back from laying the girl down. "A counterpart of this blasted hole."

"Except for that whatcha-call-it under the blue bedspread," Cabel amended. "Wonder what it is? Hold the light a second. I'll soon find out."

A single leap carried him up the flight of four steps. He grasped the cover and gave a violent jerk. Revealed then was a massive, green chair, in whose high headrest a round pool of fiery

crimson flashed and sparkled in the uncertain torchlight.

With a wild yell Cabel dropped the cover and leaped down the stairs beside Peters. For long, tense seconds both stood staring with bulging eyes, gripped in speechless awe.

Finally Cabel spoke. "Rubies?" he asked in a hushed, quavering voice.

"You better believe it!" Peters declared. "And the chair's carved out of one solid chunk of jade. Great Christopher! So this is where the throne of Buddha was spirited away to!"

"Throne of Buddha," Cabel repeated in a puzzled tone, adding hurriedly: "And a while back it was Wong Tan's daughter. Listen here, Sam!" he seized Peters suddenly and lifted him clear of the floor. "You've been in this neck of the woods before. What's the idea of keeping me in the dark, anyway?"

"Let me down, blast you!" Peters screeched, setting up a furious struggle. "There—now keep them big paws in your pockets! I've never been in here, but I'll tell you how I know about the story of this chair, and the Chinese girl.

"When I was in Likiang last, the talk of the town was of a Yunnan trader, Wong Tan, and his daughter. They had started through Chimili Pass with a caravan, bound for Burma. They completely dropped from sight, caravan and all. A roving band of Tibetan dacoits received blame for the affair.

"Naturally, when I saw that Chinese girl here I figured that the Lissus and not the Tibetans had turned the trick. That satisfy you?

"Now for the throne of Buddha. Fifty-odd years ago it reposed in the great Buddhist temple at Mutong, which lies not a great ways from here over in Tibet.

"One stormy monsoon night the temple and lamasery adjoining were sacked, and every living soul in the place slaughtered. In the plunder was

this ruby-studded chair, called the throne of Buddha because Buddha centuries ago, legend has it, plunked his fat carcass in it, whenever he visited Mutong.

"As there were no survivors to the attack it never became known who got the throne, Chinese, Tibetans themselves, or marauding Mohammedans from Kansu. No one then, nor since that time that I ever heard of, suspected these black Lissu devils.

"And here this priceless jade piece, that to this day is talked about in Tibet, has been hidden away for over half a century! Great Christopher!" Peters stalked over and mounted the stairs. For seconds he stood rubbing his hand over the cluster of huge, varishaped rubies in their mounting of polished jade.

Cabel stood back feasting his eyes upon the dazzling display. After nearly a minute he spoke.

"Is this the treasure that poor devil that made the map found?"

"It can't be. In his delirium he raved about gold. Never a word about rubies or jade. Anyway, the place he indicated on the map with a big cross must lie ten miles or more farther back in this valley. He passed right by here, that's certain. I doubt, though, that he stopped, having had a brush with the Lissus back where he uncovered his own treasure."

"Do you think we had better—would you——" Cabel floundered nervously. "Do you think we can get any of these rubies out?"

"Think?" Peters demanded, aghast. "I know! Certainly you're not fostering any crazy idea we'll pass this up to go on looking for some measly gold?"

"No," Cabel replied a trifle sheepishly. "But, gosh, Sam, stumbling onto a pile of wealth like this staggered me. Gee! I—but hold on. We've forgotten something. How about getting out of here? Forty thrones won't do us any

good unless we find a way to leave here."

"We'll get out," Peters declared confidently. "I think we can locate the device that springs the door in the wall. But if we can't, we'll fight our way out when the *tongpas* bring a force back to overpower us.

"The important thing right now is to break up that cluster and get the rubies stowed away in the packs. We'll have to work fast. This torch won't burn forever. Too, the black devils are apt to show up any instant. You topple the blasted thing off onto the floor. We've got to bust it up so we can handle it."

Darting onto the pedestal, Cabel tugged and twisted the heavy throne chair across the smooth stone to the edge. Then with a quick tilt he sent it crashing to the floor.

Peters gave an exultant shout as it shattered into a dozen parts. Dropping the torch, he seized one of the broken legs. A few savage blows severed both chair arms from the jeweled back.

Just as Cabel descended to the floor, Peters shattered the leg in an attempt to break the thick back a few inches below the cluster of rubies.

"Hey!" Cabel protested. "You'll never do it that way. Lemme show you." Staggering over to the stairs with the wrecked chair, he gave it a rap across a step corner. The flat section of jade containing the rubies broke free.

"Holy smoke!" Cabel ejaculated as he retrieved the slab and laid it on the steps. "It's heavy as lead. We can't cart it along in one piece."

"Bust the cluster up," Peters ordered. "We can't unmount the stones, but we'll chip the pieces of jade they're in down as small as possible."

Crashing the slab against a sharp corner of stone, Cabel cracked it squarely through the center of the cluster. Then the difficult and painstaking labor of extracting the gems began.

THEY had been working away upward of an hour, when suddenly Cabel laid down a fragment of jade and sniffed the air. Peters looked up and did the same. Then he darted a glance at the torch, propped up between two slabs of jade. It was burning less brightly than it had been.

"Breathing's getting harder in here," he said to Cabel.

Cabel eyed the old man a moment. "Sam, do you suppose this hole is shut up air-tight?" he asked.

Peters rose abruptly. "I'm afraid it is," he said grimly. "If that's so, in another half hour we'll be like a couple of fish stranded on dry land. We better be looking for a way to open that door, or the one in the ceiling.

"Don't chip those hunks smaller. Dump all of 'em into the packs. I'll be feeling around meantime for the spring or lever."

Emptying the two pack sacks and refilling them with jade fragments, Cabel accomplished in less than five minutes. Then he snatched up the torch and joined Peters, working in the dark at the rear wall.

"Covered every inch high as I can reach," the old man reported grimly. "No luck yet, though."

Square foot by square foot they explored the walls, high up even as Peters, standing on Cabel's shoulders, could reach. Then the ceiling underwent a minute groping of the old man's fingers. Not a trace of the opening through which the witch priests had vanished, was to be found.

Discovery of a hole about two feet square in one corner of the ceiling at first raised the hopes of both men. Peters thrust his torch up through the aperture. He groaned when he found it led into one of the hollow-stone Buddhas.

"Blast the luck!" he cried, on sliding back down to the floor. "I thought sure when I struck that opening into the

hollow figure I'd find an air vent of some kind in the figure."

Cabel said nothing. Breathing hard from the exertion of walking around with Peters perched on his shoulders, he wobbled over and sat down on the steps. Torch in hand, the old man crossed to the rear wall. For the next five minutes, he explored its surface for the second time. Presently he came back and dropped down beside Cabel.

"By Christopher, lad," he said solemnly, "the air's getting awful. We'll be dead in another half hour!"

Cabel forced a laugh.

It failed to deceive Peters. "No use trying to make-believe," he said bluntly. "I'm no fool. You know as well as I that we're gone if we don't get air in here mighty quick."

"Yes, I know it, Sam," Cabel admitted soberly. "But as long as I've got a breath in me I won't give up. Every minute I've been expecting the blacks to spring the trap door above to have a look at us. Surely they know they've got us in here."

"Lad," Peters spoke up after a long silence, "maybe I ought to let you go on hoping. But I don't think it would be right. We're doomed. We might as well look things square in the face. The Lissus won't be peering down in here—not till they're satisfied we're dead. Probably we're not the first ones that have been trapped in here to die from suffocation. If they weren't waiting for us to die, they'd have sprung that door above long before now."

CHAPTER XIV.

AMBUSHED!

PETERS' tragic words produced a strange effect upon Cabel. His face turned a sickly gray. His eyes grew round and starey. His jaw sagged and his shoulders slumped forward. For perhaps twenty seconds he sat huddled thus.

Then, as quickly as the cold fear of death had driven into his blood, the fury of desperation fired his emotions to a white heat.

He sprang up and started pacing the floor like a caged animal. Presently he halted and pointed a trembling hand at Peters.

"We can't die here!" he rasped. "Strangle for air!" He thrust his fingers into his collar and ripped it wide open. "Those black devils have got to open one of these doors before long. They've *got* to, I tell you, or else——"

Cabel broke off speaking, with lightninglike abruptness.

Color, eagerness swept over his blanched face. A wild laugh broke from his lips. The next instant he was on his knees, pawing through the heap of discarded provisions. A triumphant shout rang out as he came up brandishing a tall tin can.

"I told you! I told you!" he shouted at Peters.

"Great Christopher, the gun powder!" Peters jumped up suddenly. But the wave of hope that crossed his face faded quickly. "There's no place to bury the stuff, so its force will take effect," he said.

"Too bad!" Cabel roared. "How about the hole that leads up into one of the Buddhas? This old baby exploded up there'll bust Mr. Buddha wide open and let some air in. If it won't I'm ready to kick off."

"Christopher! The very place!" Peters' enthusiasm revived. "Pour me a handful of powder. I'll make a fuse out of a strip of that silk cover."

"I got a better idea," Cabel objected, working off the lid.

Puzzled, but saying nothing, Peters watched Cabel remove the two dynamite-cap boxes from his shirt pocket, cram them into the powder can, then replace the lid.

"Great Christopher!" he protested then. "You're going to try to hurl the

thing like a bomb up inside the Buddha?"

"I should say not. I'd be sure to miss the hole and set off the works in here. Tear a couple of strips off that silk. That's the stuff! Now!"

Cabel held the can upside down by the strip of silk wrapped lengthwise around it. "Get the idea? Those dynamite caps, with the powder pressing on top of 'em, are resting in the lid of the can. Some bomb, what I mean!"

Peters scratched his head in perplexity. "But how are you going to set 'em off?" he persisted.

"Easy. You'll see later. Right now you're climbing up inside Mr. Buddha and hang the can, lid down. You can do it. Fix an arrow crosswise and hang the can from that. Quick, now! I'm feeling plenty wabbly from this rotten air. I can't hold out much longer. Tuck the can in your shirt. I'll hoist you up there."

Half a minute later Peters was drawing himself up into the hollow figure. A moment later his loud cry announced the successful disposal of the deadly can. He came sliding down.

"Here," Cabel instructed then, tossing the torch up to him. "Fasten it up there close enough so the light will shine on the can."

Again Peters screwed up through the hollow Buddha. Wedging the torch crosswise in the narrow neck, he came sliding down.

The instant he got back onto the floor, Cabel thrust the loaded crossbow into his hands.

"It's up to you now, Sam," he said grimly. "Smack that can square on the lid first crack. You can do it, old-timer. You got to! See the can all right?"

"Looms up like a blasted mirror," the old man, lying flat on his back under the hole, replied. "Couldn't miss 'er if I tried."

Cabel, standing a yard back, eyes

glued to the copper arrow tip gleaming in the dim reflection from the torch above, waited.

Then came a thundering rumble. A flash of red, angry fire shot down and seemed to envelop Peters.

With a cry of fear, Cabel dove headlong to drag him back. To his relief, however, the old man was struggling up before he reached him.

"What a smash!" Peters cried. "Looked like hell itself split open when she hit the can."

Excitedly brushing him aside, Cabel moved under the hole and peered upward. He thrilled at the sight of a ragged patch of blue sky. Daylight had broken. Filling his lungs with the cool air that already had filtered down through the opening, he turned to Peters.

"Out we go," he said gleefully.

"How do you figure to get up there, fly?" Peters asked dryly.

"Gee! Never thought of that." Cabel's ardor suddenly wilted.

"And don't forget we've the Chinese girl to get out, too."

"Oh, well," Cabel returned lightly, "we're sitting pretty, any way you look at it. A few minutes ago we were counting the minutes we had to live. Let's see now."

"Tell you what," Peters spoke up. "I'll climb up top and see how things lie outside. I've a hunch that big bang'll bring plenty Lissus over this way. Boost me up."

Two minutes later Peters landed back on the floor beside himself with excitement.

"Not a soul in sight yet," he said. "Now's our chance to get out—if there was only a way for you to make it."

"Don't worry about that," Cabel declared gayly. "I ripped that silk covering up and knotted the strips into a rope. Take the end up and tie it around a ragged edge. Haul up our stuff, then I'll come."

"But the girl," Peters protested. "We can't abandon her."

"Who is?" Cabel flared up. "I'll bring her along. On my shoulder. Up y'u go!"

Five minutes later all their paraphernalia lay on the pedestal at the head of the stairs outside. Inside the shrine Cabel was looping one end of the impromptu rope under the arms of the bewildered Chinese girl. Coiling the slack on the floor, he started climbing hand over hand. Once up in the Buddha, he braced his feet and started hauling her up.

"Whew!" he gasped a few seconds later when he had worked far enough up, with the girl hung across his shoulder, to hook one hand over the rim of the broken-off figure. "That's all the acrobatics I want for a while. I'll—" A low hiss suddenly stilled him.

"Hurry!" Peters cried. "I hear 'em coming!"

"Go ahead," Cabel answered. "I'll be down as quick as I can."

To swing the girl over the jagged edge and let her down into Peters' hands was the work of but a few seconds. A moment later Cabel descended.

Now for the first time he was aware of the havoc wrought by the explosion. The ponderous canopy, deprived of support at one corner, had whipped down, then rebounded upward, dislodging the three remaining Buddhas. All that stood on the pedestal now was the shattered, headless body. The canopy, Buddhas and altars, lay on the ground in a tangled heap.

"What a boomerang their penning us up turned out to be!" Cabel cried. "Wait till they come busting up here and see what's happened to their trick murder factory."

"Like fun we'll wait here!" Peters swung one of the treasure packs onto his shoulder and scooped up the bows and quivers. "We're clearing out. When they see this, and see what's hap-

pened to the throne of Buddha, ten thousand dynamite caps won't hold 'em off.

"Grab your pack and the girl, and come along. Those devils I heard a minute ago back in the jungle may bob up any instant."

With that Peters scampered down the steps and headed for the break they had made in the jungle wall the night before. Pack on one shoulder, girl on the other, Cabel hurried after him.

When still yards short of cover, Cabel suddenly caught a flash of color out of the tail of his eye. Darting a quick look around he discovered the giant *tongpa* and his five gaudily robed companions breaking into the clearing behind the shrine.

Their cries at discovering him blended into an angry chorus. One of the smaller *tongpas* whipped out a short sword and made as if to launch an attack. Before he had covered ten steps, however, the giant in yellow bellowed a command that brought him back. Obviously, the escape of their victims right now was of less concern than the devastated shrine.

Plunging into the brush, Cabel found Peters kneeling, covering his retreat with the crossbow. Looking through the matted barrier he saw the six *tongpas* pawing excitedly around the crumpled canopy and shattered Buddhas.

The girl and pack slid suddenly from Cabel's shoulders and he made a grab for the crossbow.

With an oath Peters snatched it away. "Blast you, no!" he cried. "They'll get back to the village and break the news quick enough without you shooting and stampeding 'em back. Quick, now! We've got to make the trail where we left it last night to cut in here, before these blasted *tongpas* return to the village and start the blacks looking for us by the hundreds."

Encumbered as the two men now were, following the trail at the foot of

the cliffs proved as slow and tiring as had been the making of it the night before. But at length the cleared space at the mouth of the defile loomed through the dense foliage.

Peters, in the lead, halted on reaching the jungle wall. Cautiously parting the vines, he peered out. Suddenly he whirled and motioned Cabel to silence.

The look on the old man's face told Cabel some new danger had sprung up. He covered the remaining few yards on tiptoe.

"The devils are on to us!" Peters whispered when he came up. "Ambushed in the trail coming out of the jungle. Maybe they're around the corner in the defile, too. I couldn't see. The blasted *tongpas* got back to the village and sent a pack here to head us off."

CHAPTER XV.

ONRUSHING SAVAGES.

CABEL made no response, but walked over and pressed his face against the slit in the brush. Neither the clearing nor the entrance of the jungle trail bore signs of an enemy. He was about to whirl around and accuse Peters of "seeing things," when suddenly a black head bobbed around the trail wall, then quickly withdrew.

"The dirty devils *are* there!" he said, surprised. "By gosh! What do you say, Sam?"

"We've got to make a break for it," Peters declared. "I doubt if any of 'em has got across into the defile yet. But no matter, we've got to go."

Cabel's jaw tightened as he studied the hundred-odd yards of open space separating them from the mouth of the defile, every yard of it exposed to the jungle trail.

"It's a long run," he said grimly, "but it's the only chance. Unless we wait and try to-night—or look for another way out."

"It's now or never," Peters declared. "To-night an elephant wouldn't be able to get through the defile. As for finding another way out—we can't walk up sheer walls."

"Well, let's get going," Cabel spoke up impatiently. "The suspense is getting my goat. I either want to get out of here with this king's ransom of rubies, or else go under. Where's my bow?"

"Better not bother with it now," Peters demurred. "Listen: We'll crash through together. The instant we clear you dash for the defile. I'll bang a couple of shots into the jungle trail and be hot after you. Those two shots should stampede the beggars long enough to let you reach cover. If not, I'll shower 'em, blast 'em. Now, when I say go, go."

"Go!"

With a crash the desperate pair broke through the tangled wall.

By the time Cabel took a dozen strides Peters' crossbow twanged. There came a flash of red at the entrance to the jungle trail. A howling knot of blacks that had sprung into view at the sound of the crash recoiled from sight. Peters loosed another arrow. When it burst he was under way.

At half distance across the clearing an object flashed in front of him. Then another, and another in quick succession. He flung a side glance and saw a mass of Lissus pouring out of the jungle, spreading out to intercept him and raining arrows as they came.

The old man thought and thought swiftly. Even if he ran the gantlet of arrows unscathed, he stood a good chance of being cut off from the defile. The Lissu rush had to be stopped!

Like a flash he dropped onto one knee and faced the deploying blacks. An arrow whipped into the bow, released and burst in the center of the widening

line. That section slowed and finally stopped in wild disorder, but the ranks on either side came charging on.

A string of oaths poured from the old man's mouth as he calmly fitted a second shaft and smashed the left line. He reached for a third. That struck, spat fire and dirt and rocks in the faces of a dozen shrieking Lissus on the right. Suddenly the entire force wavered, seemed on the verge of retreat.

Rising suddenly, Peters launched another arrow and fled.

Just as he darted into the defile the milling horde recovered and came tearing on.

A few yards down the defile Peters encountered Cabel, leaning against the wall. "Can't stop here!" he cried. "Here's your bow and quiver. We've got to put a few of these turns behind us. The devils will be busting in here any second. The only thing that'll stop 'em, the way they're worked up over that shrine affair, is death itself. Fear of the caps hardly makes 'em hesitate."

Apprehension stabbed Cabel as the old man went staggering past him like a drunken man. Overtaking him he snatched away the heavy pack sack and hung it around his own neck.

"I'll move on," Cabel cried. "You try and keep 'em slowed up till we get to where it narrows. We'll gain fast then."

Around bend after bend they retreated. Cabel floundered along in the lead, stooping under the weight of both packs and the girl. Peters brought up the rear, walking backward, and shooting every time the vanguard of the pursuers broke around a corner.

At first it seemed as though they gained not a foot. Presently, however, the slowing-down effect of the shots showed. Only when a long, straight stretch intervened between turns did the Lissus come within view.

Finally, on backing around a corner

after launching an arrow that landed a good hundred yards short of the enemy, Peters wheeled and caught up with Cabel.

"Don't weaken, lad!" he cried. "We're gaining. And here's the narrow stretch right ahead. I'll take my pack now."

"No!" Cabel wheezed. "I'm all right." To prove it he broke into a slow trot.

A moment after, on passing into the trenchlike part of the gorge, both men drew up with the suddenness of a shot. Not two hundred yards ahead loomed the great log gate—lowered!

"Of all the rotten luck!" Cabel burst out wrathfully. "Now we are in a pickle. Where's my bow? Quick!"

"Wait!" Peters commanded. "Maybe I can raise the gates. There's time to see. Stand up there close by the first one. Be ready to go under if I can."

"But you——" Cabel began.

"Blast me! I'll take care of me! Do as I say!"

The old man dashed to the foot of the path, hewn along the sheer rock wall. It was barely wide enough for one man, and made its upward progress in a series of level stretches and steep inclines.

Winded badly from negotiating the dozen or more steep pitches at top speed without stopping, Peters dropped down to rest. Then finally he gained the crude platform overhanging the cliff about twenty feet above the gates.

The platform and lifting devices for the gates, though crude of construction and primitive, were no less ingenious than the gates and their placement in grooves in the cliff walls.

The platform was about thirty feet long by twenty wide. It was formed with small saplings lashed together with cane rope and was laid across a dozen or more massive squared logs protruding out from the cliff face.

At each end of the platform, directly

over a gate, stood a huge log frame, built inside of which was a crudely rounded drum affair wound with a twisted cane rope. The rope extended down from the drum and fastened onto the top of the gate about midway its width.

Fitted onto the makeshift axle on which the drum revolved, was a heavy wooden crank ten or twelve feet long.

Peters, when he had regained his breath, took a single look at one of the cranks, and groaned in despair. Not even the burly Cabel, he realized, nor three more like him all working together, could have started the drum winding in rope and lifting the gate. At least a dozen Lissus, it was obvious from the length of the crank, comprised the crew that manned the machine.

With a baffled curse, Peters turned and took a step down the path, then faltered and went back. An idea had snapped into his mind.

Darting to the edge of the platform he leaned over and shouted to Cabel: "Lad! Lad!"

Cabel, waiting for the gate to open, glanced up. He stood for a moment watching Peters gesturing wildly before he interpreted the motions and headed for the foot of the ledge path.

Cabel had a hundred feet to go, when the din of the nearing Lissus shattered the air. Before he covered another twenty feet, the narrow way rumbled and thundered with their savage chorus.

The vanguard swept around the bend, hardly twice as far from the path as he was.

"Sam!" he yelled frantically, breaking into a run. "Shoot!"

The thunder of the savage horde drowned out his words; but Peters needed no one to prompt him to action. Before a dozen black bodies hurtled around the bend into the narrow corridor, an arrow was on its way down.

Peters knew he could never drive the human tide back around the bend, for

there were hundreds of Lissus pressing forward from far behind in the defile. His one hope was to check those that had broken into the corridor; give Cabel a chance to gain the path and start up. Then to fairly shower the blacks with bursting arrows, and prevent them unlimbering their own weapons for a moment or two.

A sob of relief broke from his clenched lips as Cabel swerved off onto the path and started climbing.

The floor of the defile now fairly bristled with Lissus, and more were pouring around the bend every second. Peters launched arrow after arrow into the milling horde. But still the front ranks pressed forward, unable to stem the tide behind.

Now Cabel was nearly halfway to the platform. But he was coming slowly. He was tired and wobbling dangerously as he climbed. He stumbled and went down on one knee. The old man's heart fairly leaped into his mouth as Cabel swayed, nearly toppled off the brink.

"Rest, lad! Rest!" he implored, forgetful in his frenzy of fear that Cabel couldn't have heard him had he been but ten feet off instead of a hundred.

Foot by foot Cabel, burdened with the girl and the two heavy treasure-filled packs, careened upward. A scant fifty feet was between him and the top; but in those last fifty feet were the steepest pitches of the whole way. It was almost unbelievable that his strength would hold.

The floor of the defile now was a bedlam of shrieking, leaping blacks. Arrows were exploding among them at five-second intervals. There was no outlet of escape. Sheer walls blocked both sides; the gate blocked the way in front; and the constant stream of warriors pouring around the bend prevented retreat.

In very few seconds some of them would be rushing up to the foot of

the cliff trail. In their frenzy of desperation they would probably come running up, to overtake the dragging Cabel.

Struck by this new danger, Peters suddenly decided upon a daring move. Leaping off the platform he dashed down the path, snatched the girl off Cabel's shoulder and went tearing upward again.

Relieved of this weight, Cabel speeded up a trifle.

The old man's move, however, was not made without cost. The respite in firing, brief as it was, had heartened the Lissus. It meant, they probably thought, that Peters had exhausted his ammunition.

By the time the old man got back to the platform and slapped an arrow into the crossbow, the blacks had darted to the foot of the path. A dozen were already ascending, and a hundred more waited their turn at the entrance to the trail.

"Oho! So that's your blasted game?" Peters muttered, letting fly at the leading black, who was coming up the narrow trail at a terrific pace.

The deadly copper tip struck the black's breast and exploded with an angry flash of fire. A wild shriek of fear and pain rose above the din. The Lissu flung up his hand, whirled, and grappled frantically at the black behind to keep from losing his footing. The second man struggled to get free, clutching at the man still behind him. The next instant all three warriors went plunging off the edge.

Again Peters shot. Two more Lissus toppled off, carrying a third victim with them. At the next shot another trio crashed down upon the stone floor. But still the line moved upward, pushed ahead by those far behind.

With a savage oath, Peters reached into his quiver for another arrow. It was empty! And he had used the last one out of Cabel's quiver minutes ago!

CHAPTER XVI.

FAST WORK!

FURIOUSLY, the old man hurled the crossbow away, and sprang down the trail.

"Quick, lad!" he pleaded, grasping Cabel's hand. "Every last arrow's gone! We've got to get to the top!"

Either the tragic news, or Peters tugging furiously to help him upward, spurred Cabel into new life. He straightened out of his crouch and came lurching along at doubled speed.

But when he finally dragged up onto the platform, he was so near exhaustion his legs refused to hold him up. He crumpled down on the logs in a daze, head drooped, gasping for breath.

Peters groaned in despair as he flashed a glance back down the trail. The leading Lissus were little more than a hundred feet off now, bounding along on all fours like wild animals. Unless some way was found to hold them back a few seconds, all was lost. In the time they required to close that hundred-foot gap, Peters could never accomplish the plan of escape he had in mind.

For an instant, the old man wavered on the verge of giving up hope. Then stubborn determination to win out, odds no matter how great, fired him to swift action.

Whipping out his knife, he bounded across to the drum over the outside gate, cut the rope leading down to the gate, and began unwinding the drum onto the platform.

With about a hundred feet of rope run out he made a hitch around the crank so that no more could unwind from the drum. Then he gave the coil of rope a kick. It sailed out beyond the outside gate, unfurling as it dropped to the canyon floor.

Dashing back across the platform, Peters saw a sight that brought forth a whoop of joy.

Cabel, so few seconds before utterly down and out, now was on his feet, pelting the ascending Lissus with huge chunks of rock, which had chipped off the cliff above and littered the inside of the platform. The blacks were no nearer than when Peters had last looked.

"By thunder lad, hold 'em!" Peters shouted. "Another ten seconds and we're fixed proper!"

Cabel left off bombarding the winding line of blacks long enough to flash the old man a wide grin, then scooped up a huge slab of crumbling rock and heaved it down.

The leading black flung up his hands, but the heavy missile tore through his flimsy guard, crashed him in the chest, and sent him reeling back into the warrior behind. Both savages tottered on the edge of the path, and then toppled off.

Meanwhile, Peters was fast at work. Slashing the rope on the drum over the inner gate, he began unwinding. When but a few feet remained on the drum he cut free the pile coiled at his feet, dragged the pile to the edge of the platform and sent it spinning down into the defile between the two gates.

Whirling then upon Cabel he shouted in his ear: "Grab the girl and follow me!"

Pausing to hurl a last chunk of rock, Cabel picked up the bewildered girl, spun around and leaped after Peters. When he reached the far end of the platform, Peters was sliding down the rope he had secured to the drum and hurled out in the defile beyond the outside gate.

The instant the old man hit the ground and sprawled away from the rope, Cabel, hugging the girl close to him, grasped the rope with his free hand. Leg curled around to check his plunge, he pushed off and went gliding down.

Hardly had his feet touched in the

defile when Peters was tugging frantically at him.

"Run!" the old man commanded. "Before they reach the top and shower us with arrows! I'll catch up with you."

As Cabel turned and fled, Peters slashed the dangling rope as high above his head as he could reach. Then, burning the end, he touched a match to it. The dry-as-tinder bamboo fiber ignited like a flash of powder.

A few seconds later, when Peters peered around a bend twenty yards down the gorge, the rope was a squirming ribbon of fire clear up to the drum crank.

"There, blast you!" Peters jeered, as a score of black figures bobbed into sight on the platform, dancing wildly around, and shrieking and yelling in baffled fury. "Try and follow us down! Or try to lift those gates, either—without ropes hooked onto the windlasses." Then he turned and set out to overhaul Cabel.

Catching up two or three minutes later, Peters clapped his young companion on the back jubilantly.

"We've won out, lad!" he cried. "There's not a way in the world they can get down in here without going clear back to the village for ropes. I cut all but a few feet off the drum over the inside gate and dropped it down where they can't get at it.

"The rope from the outside drum, that we came down on, I set fire to. It's burning now, clean back to the crank handle I had it tied onto.

"Yes, sir, by Christopher! We've got almost an hour's start on 'em. Time enough to take us out of here and clear down into the Salwin gorge. Let 'em try to find us!"

LATE that afternoon two tired men and a still frightened Chinese girl tramped into Chonru, the Lutz village that Peters, on the day before, had

given a wide berth on account of his suspicion of the village headman.

An hour after their arrival, after much parleying and dickerings, and finally the paying over of a handful of silver rupees, arrangements were made to have the Chinese girl escorted to her people in Likiang.

Then Peters tendered the headman another coin, saying something to him in native tongue.

"What's that for?" Cabel demanded curiously.

"Place to sleep to-night."

"Sky Gangsters," by Glenn Garrison, a long action story of to-day, will appear in our next issue. It's a thrilling yarn of two rival gangs of city gunmen, and an aviator who becomes entangled in their activities.

"Sleep? To-night? Here? Say—I don't intend to sleep till I get somewhere and turn my part of Mr. Buddha's armchair into honest-to-goodness cash money. Come on! We gotta be somewhere by dark."

"Blast you!" Peters grumbled. "To hear you talk a body'd think I was a coolie, instead of a blasted millionaire. By Christopher, I won't go!"

But even as he declared himself spiritedly, the old man slung his pack sack over his shoulder and stood, waiting for Cabel to set off.



BILLY THE KID

By NORMAN H. CROWELL

INSOUCIANT, calm, and deadly cold he stood
 Defiant to the odds that stalked his days;
 A quiet lad, who, with his guns ablaze
 Sowed sudden death as none before him could;
 He knew the art that nestles in the grip
 Of trusted, well-oiled weapons deftly swung
 To answer roar with roar—and then he hung
 Still smoking on a slender, boyish hip.

O, none with eye so tender—yet of steel—
 No heart so young—yet old beyond belief;
 No man so cruel in his fighting zeal
 Yet none so ready to a foe's relief;
 Red death accounted his the luckless ones
 Who dared the thunder of his lightning guns!



Daly Crashes the Gate

By Vic Whitman

A Story of Jimmy Daly—Nomad

CHAPTER I.

A PALM BEACH ROSE.

JIMMY DALY, whimsical young soldier of fortune, leaned idly against a steel canopy post of the Daneli pier and gazed out over Lake Worth. Across the lake gleamed the lights of West Palm Beach.

Daly wasn't interested in them. His attention was centered upon a party coming ashore from one of the big, brilliantly lighted yachts that lay at anchor in the lake. Judging from the light laughter and conversation, audible over the purring sound of the launch's engine, it was a gay party.

"Probably goin' to some night club to dance," reflected Daly casually. "Not such a bad idea. I could stand a dance or two myself."

Having considered the idea, he accepted it, not in the least deterred by the fact that he had less than a dollar in his pocket. As free as the winds

that blew upon his attractive face, as alert as a captain of finance, monetary worries never gave Jimmy Daly any trouble.

He went where fancy dictated, did what he pleased, and never went hungry or ill-clothed. Whether he had one dollar or five hundred in his pocket—it was all the same to him. Adaptable, resourceful, he could always make enough honest money to keep him going.

He glanced down, taking a quick inventory of his wardrobe. A neat, gray lounge suit, black well-polished shoes, white shirt adorned by a green-and-red striped tie—this wasn't exactly the rig in which to go dancing at any of Palm Beach's select night clubs, but it would have to do.

Unless—Daly thoughtfully eyed the man who was swaying unsteadily on his feet some paces distant, and who was faultlessly garbed in tuxedo, rakish panama and cane.

"That guy's just about my size," murmured Jimmy Daly. "What's

more, he's almost over the bay. Maybe, after all, I can go in style."

Now the launch was just circling in to the pier. Daly glanced briefly at a slim, calm-eyed man in a tan suit who had strolled out on the pier and stopped beside him, then transferred his gaze to the launch. Two young couples and an elderly woman were passengers.

One of the couples instantly held Daly's interest. The man was tall, dark, and handsome in a supercilious sort of way. The girl was stunning. Her vivid, red-lipped beauty was crowned with soft, tawny hair; white teeth flashed radiantly as she smiled, and her lithe grace was enhanced by the Spanish shawl she was wearing.

Jimmy Daly whistled softly to himself. "Ooh, brother mine, what a little sweetheart *she* is!" he thought. "Palm Beach, you owe me a dance with that girl, and I'm goin' to have it to-night if it's the last thing I ever do."

His admiration must have been plain upon his face, for the man in the tan suit was regarding him with some amusement.

"Like her looks, son?" he asked pleasantly

Daly grinned. "I'll say I do. Who is she?"

"That's Dorothy Swift," said the other, and continued to regard him amusedly.

Dorothy Swift! Daly's active brain groped for the name. Oh yes, that afternoon he had heard two men talking about the fabulously wealthy Mrs. Swift and the diamond pendant she had recently purchased.

Extra detectives were in Palm Beach, the men had said, because of Mrs. Swift's propensity for wearing her jewelry carelessly.

The elderly woman in the launch must be Mrs. Swift, then.

"Wonder how chances are of meetin' this Dorothy Swift?" inquired Daly.

"Not very good." The man smiled. "That is, unless you've got a pedigree a mile long. Very exclusive, the Swifts, and the hardest social gate to crash in America."

"That so?" To himself Jimmy Daly added, "It's the most sport crashin' the hardest gates. Now I *know* I'm goin' to dance with that kid to-night."

Still leaning against the post, he watched the tall man spring to the pier and turn, offering his hand to Dorothy Swift. Laughing, she refused it and jumped out of the launch. The lace of her shawl caught on a piece of piping at the pier's edge. For a second she stood there swaying, dangerously unbalanced.

Then Jimmy Daly was by her side, and was steadying her. "Beg pardon," he said lightly. "I just thought you'd rather stay out of the lake than take a swim right now."

Blue eyes turned inquiringly up to gray ones and noted instantly the faintly quizzical expression on a type of face rather new to her. It was the face of a man who goes through life with a smile on his lips, who asks no odds of any one—a face doubly attractive for its youthfulness.

Miss Swift smiled. "Thanks awfully!" she said. "That was stupid of me." She turned to her escort. "Sorry, Joe," she said gayly. "The next time, I'll take your hand."

The tall man looked Daly up and down with some disdain. He started to speak. Just then the man in the panama lurched forward and bumped squarely into him and clung fondly to him.

"Here!" the tall man snapped angrily. "Can't you see where you're going? Let go!"

The panama nodded in maudlin apology. "'Scuse me. Thought I knew you, thass all."

Yet, the watching Daly saw him cling for another moment before he

released his grip and stumbled to the other end of the pier.

Daly frowned thoughtfully. "Now what the devil is the idea?" he muttered.

CHAPTER II.

SOMETHING WRONG!

MRS. SWIFT'S party was leaving. Daly saw them select wheel chairs from the clamorous group of colored boys, and heard the directions. They were going to the White Eagle, newest and largest of Palm Beach night clubs. Well, that was all right; he'd go to the White Eagle, too.

The man in the tan suit was leaving. Genially, he called over his shoulder to Daly: "Nice work, son. You've made a good start, anyway."

Daly grinned. "Thanks."

The panama was weaving its way back. "Gotta ma'sh?"

"A match? Sure." Daly fished in his pocket and brought forth a package.

"Thanksh."

The man endeavored to light the stub of his cigar, but cigar and flame refused to meet. Daly helped him, the while casting an eye over the tuxedo. An idea came to him.

"You're ridin' 'em high and handsome to-night, brother," he observed. "Bed's the best place for you right now, do you know that?"

"Sure. Been trying to get there for the lasht hour. Can't sheem to think where 'tis I'm shtaying."

Jimmy Daly grinned. "Well, now that's a tough break," he sympathized. "Maybe I can give you a lift."

"'Sin a hotel."

"Fine! There's the Breakers, the Poinciana, the Palm Beach, Whitehall, the Daneli, the Alba—that's all of 'em I know."

After much grave pondering the man decided upon his hotel. "You coming, too?"

"You bet your life I'm goin'," said Daly.

"Thass fine. My name's Stevensh. Wanna give you a drink. Besh frien' I got in the worl'."

"You said it, brother. I'll pass up the hooch, though, if you don't mind. Never was much on that stuff."

Stevens didn't seem to mind. "Wheel shair," he commented. "I got money, plenty of it."

"Yeah? Well, you keep it right in your pocket. Come on, we'll walk. The exercise'll do you good."

"All ri'. Besh frien' in the worl'."

Together they set out for the hotel, Daly holding to Stevens' arm. Walking more or less steadily, they went along that part of the Lake Trail where lighted shops display high-priced wares.

Here the wealth and beauty of a nation were to be seen to only a slightly lesser extent than on the Breakers' promenade, white-flanneled men and beautifully dressed women sauntering in the balmy air, or being propelled in wheel chairs by indolent black boys.

Jimmy Daly noticed it with the lively interest characteristic of him. A great place, this Palm Beach with its great hotels, its expensive cars spinning along County Road or racing down the Ocean Boulevard, its white beaches, waving palms, and its almost feverish air of gayety.

He grinned as he contemplated what was ahead of him. A great place for four-flushers, too. Well, to-night he'd be a four-flusher. If only he could contrive to get into that tuxedo, he'd crash the gate. Things like that never stopped him. It was just a great big game. And how!

Ten minutes later Daly got Stevens to his room. There, the man seemed to collapse entirely, so Daly stretched him out on the bed and removed his shoes. They were nice patent leathers, but Daly knew at a glance that they would not fit him. However, his own

would do to wear with the tuxedo. He went to a closet to see if he could find shoe trees.

Had Daly not been alert he must have been struck down. A cautious step sounded just behind him, muffled in the carpet—a step which he sensed rather than heard. Without turning, he leaped to one side as a blackjack came down to glance painfully from his arm.

Astonished though he was, Jimmy Daly was used to sudden situations. Whirling, he shot a left to Stevens' jaw, following it with a lashing right that knocked the man clear across the room on his heels, and dumped him limply in a corner.

Puzzled, Daly stood over him. "Something's wrong here," he muttered. "Either this guy wasn't so soused as he seemed and wanted to get me for something, or else he just started on a fit of the woozies."

A thought came to Daly, startling in its possibilities, but he dismissed it. "Humph. No reason why he'd want to get me. I never saw him before in my life."

For a few minutes Jimmy Daly sat on the edge of the bed and pondered the matter. He had a queer little hunch that things weren't quite as they should be, that developments would result. His gray eyes shone eagerly. Let 'em result, the more the merrier.

But all this was beside the point. He was going dancing at the White Eagle, and he needed that tuxedo. He lifted the unconscious Stevens and placed him once more on the bed.

"I guess that sock with the blackjack makes it all right to borrow your clothes for the evenin'," he told the prone man. "Anyway, I don't think you'll feel much like wearin' 'em any more to-night."

Daly made short work of disrobing the unconscious man.

Rapidly he made the change, then took Stevens' money and papers and put them in plain sight on the bureau. Care

free and a roamer Jimmy Daly might be, but there was nothing dishonest about him.

Dressed, he surveyed himself in the long door mirror. Perfect, as though he had been poured into the tuxedo. He picked up the cane, flicked at the corner of the white-silk handkerchief that showed from his breast pocket, and grinned.

"You don't need any money, Daly," he assured himself. "A guy with a little nerve and a snappy show window can get away with murder here in Palm Beach."

He put on the panama and removed the room key from the door. Should he lock Stevens in? He decided against it. An unlocked door wouldn't make any difference to Stevens, and it might come in handy for Daly later on. A guy never could tell about those little things.

Women looked at Jimmy Daly as he walked through the lobby. He was different, somehow. There was an eager sparkle in his gray eyes, a suggestion of self-confidence in the swing of his shoulders that blended agreeably with the sophistication of his manner. Cool, perfectly at ease, he gave the impression of being to the manner born.

Outside, he waved away the chair boys and started for the White Eagle. It would cost plenty to go there, but he might as well crash the gate thoroughly, while he was at it. He chuckled. There would be a kick in it—perhaps a literal kick if they found out that he didn't have quite a dollar in his pocket.

CHAPTER III.

A NOMAD.

THE night was mellow with that mellowness that is characteristic of Florida. A great round moon hung in the sky, and the intoxicating perfume of night-blooming flowers was in the air. It was a night for romance and ad-

venture—in Palm Beach where anything can happen.

Jimmy Daly felt it to the full. Dorothy Swift had smiled at him and thanked him for doing her a favor. It made no difference to him that she was the heiress to millions. He would have his dance with her, though she be a princess of royal blood.

He walked into the White Eagle as if he owned the place, handing his hat and cane to the girl in the hat room. The head waiter looked him over and bowed.

"You are alone, sir?"

"Just now—yes." His eyes were searching the big room. "That table for five over there by the window near Mrs. Swift's party—that will be about right, I think."

One could hardly give a table for five to a single person. "Of course, if the gentleman has guests coming later, why that——"

"I don't know just where they are now," said Daly easily. "They may be playing at Bradley's."

Serenely he followed the head waiter to the table. As he passed Dorothy Swift she looked up. Her eyes traveled over him for an indifferent moment, passed on, then returned quickly, as if in looking away she had recognized him.

Then she gave him a puzzled, reserved little smile. Daly bowed, and met calmly the stare of her escort.

"That bozo looks like he'd enjoy slappin' me down," Daly thought as he took his seat. "Somehow, I wish he'd try it."

Well, he'd got in. The howl would come later when he received his bill. But that was well in the future, and Jimmy Daly seldom bothered much about the future.

He lighted a cigarette and glanced about the White Eagle. The hour was early, but already people were streaming through the doors. Lively chat-

ter filled the room, smoke drifted lazily about, and cigarette girls plied their wares from table to table. Up in a balcony arranged as the quarter-deck of a ship sat the dance band getting ready to break into rhythm.

Jewels flashed and glittered in the lights. Casually, Jimmy Daly glanced toward Mrs. Swift. Around her neck was a pendant. Although Daly knew little of the value of such things, he could not mistake the great value of this one. No wonder the dicks were "covering" her. That pendant represented a fortune.

Then the music started, soft, seductive. Daly's eyes sought the tawny hair. Just how was he to get his dance? He might merely saunter over and ask her, justifying his action on the basis of his service at the pier.

Still, that would be presumption—forcing himself upon her gratitude. From her point of view, gratitude probably didn't mean dancing with a stranger. No, he'd have to wait until a better opportunity offered.

Daly sighed as he watched her rise and glide out over the floor in the arms of the tall man. What a wow of a dancer she was! He'd known, though, that she'd be good.

The music became louder, crackling out on a crescendo. Jimmy Daly's foot tapped the floor to the tempo. Now a man was singing from the balcony:

"I'm watching and waiting for my Palm Beach Rose.
How I love her, miss her,
Goodness only knows——"

Palm Beach Rose! That was a good name for Dorothy Swift. She was like that in her freshness and fragrance. She was——

"Cut it out!" Daly admonished himself sternly. "You'll be fallin' for this girl if you keep that up, and that'll never do. After to-night, you'll never see her again, anyway, so what the

devil! Just one dance and then you'll be goin'. You got a lot of the world to see yet, kid, don't forget it."

After all, it was just the moments in life that counted. A dance here and there, a smile here and there and that person faded out of your life. It was the way things were. Roaming, drifting, following the urge, there was the only true stability.

With startling suddenness the hall went dark. Little feminine "Ohs" and "Ahs" of alarm mingled with laughter and the inevitable catcalls arose. The music almost died away then swelled as the musicians ripped into another chorus.

A draft made itself felt on Jimmy Daly's neck, coming as from a window quickly opened. Then, from Mrs. Swift's table, came a scream. Instantly, Jimmy Daly was on his feet, had started toward the other table. This was no ordinary short circuit of lights. This was something that had been planned out.

Somebody scuffed by him in the darkness. He reached out and clutched and his hands gripped a man's arm. The arm instantly jerked savagely and was free.

LIGHTS flashed on again. Daly's eyes were on Mrs. Swift. Both her hands were at her throat, and her face was a ghastly white. The pendant was gone.

Two men hurried to her. They were in evening clothes, but unmistakably detectives. The manager of the club rushed across the floor, breathless and full of apologies.

Men and women at adjoining tables rose from their chairs, that they might look on the better. The band kept blazing away, as if determined to syncope the incident to nothingness.

The head waiter joined the group. In a low tone he said something to one of the detectives, who looked

quickly at Jimmy Daly, then walked over to him.

"You here alone?" he demanded.

Daly nodded. "Yes."

"H'm. Mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"Not a bit."

The second detective had joined the first, and attention was diverted to Jimmy Daly.

"How long have you been here in Palm Beach?"

"Oh, just a few hours."

The detective paused to watch Mrs. Swift being half led, half carried to an anteroom, attended by her daughter.

"A few hours, hey?" he resumed. "Where you staying?"

Daly seemed to reflect. "I haven't just decided yet," he answered coolly.

"Oh, you haven't!" The detective glanced significantly at his companion. "Just what might your business be, anyway?"

It was a tight position, but Jimmy Daly was enjoying it. "I'm a nomad," he said gravely.

"A nomad! Never heard of that business. What the hell is a nomad, Bill?"

The tall man of the Swifts' party tapped one of the detectives on the arm.

"I saw this man down on the Daneli pier when we came in from the yacht," he said, indicating Daly. "He was looking us over very closely. That's suspicious."

Daly lighted a cigarette. His face was expressionless. "Yes, and I'm still lookin' you over," he said evenly. "Laugh that to death."

The first detective frowned at Daly. "Come on with us," he ordered.

Jimmy Daly was thinking rapidly. The draft from the window that had been closed as suddenly as it had been opened—that meant something. Undoubtedly the necklace had been

snatched and passed to some one at that window.

"Come on," repeated the detective.

Daly nodded. "Sure," he said.

Between the two detectives, Daly walked out into another room of the club, a room that gave to a foyer. A door, partly ajar, was across the foyer. He noticed that.

In the little room, the detectives went carefully through Daly's clothing, even making him remove his shoes.

"He hasn't got it on him, at any rate," said the first. "But you'd better call headquarters, Bill, and have the chief send down a car. We'll hold this bird till he can give some explanation of his actions." He stepped forward with a pair of handcuffs. "Here you, slide into these!"

It would never do to be taken to headquarters and held there. Jimmy Daly was beginning to see that two and two made four. There was work to be done, and he wanted to do it by himself.

"Fair enough," he answered laconically. "Just a minute till I tie this shoe up." He knelt and fumbled with the shoe lace. Then he tensed his muscles, gripped the edge of the carpet, and yanked hard upon it. The detective's feet shot from under him. He did a half somersault and landed with a crash.

In the same motion Daly whirled, dived at the knees of the other detective, and spilled him. Then he darted into the foyer. A waiter tried to stop him, but Daly got by him by the simple expedient of straight-arming him in the face.

"Set 'em up in the other alley," Daly said, as he dashed out a rear door. "This is gettin' to be quite a party. And that reminds me—I haven't had that dance yet."

Realizing that a description of him would be broadcast, he hurried directly to the hotel. Before going up to

Stevens' room, he said a few words to the desk clerk. Surprised, the clerk nodded and rang a bell.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL THINGS CAN HAPPEN.

DALY was half expectant of an attack as he flung open Stevens' door. But nothing happened as he stepped into the room and switched on the light.

Stevens was lying face down on the bed, in nearly the same position that Daly had left him. One hand was hidden beneath his chest. Daly noticed this and his mouth straightened. Then he yawned and stretched.

"Ho-hum," Daly said aloud. "This poor devil's out for fair. May as well change my clothes, and hit the trail."

Following which, he was on the bed in one catlike spring, and reaching for the hand that was hidden. Immediately Stevens began to struggle, but Daly had the advantage. In one motion he had wrenched the gun free and was away.

"Drunk, are you?" Daly said calmly. "Well, you're not so drunk that you can't walk over to that corner there and turn your face to the wall. No funny business now, either."

Stevens sized up the graceful figure before him. From the set of the jaw and the cold gleam of the gray eyes, he judged it best to do as he was told. Growling, he went to the corner.

"What's the idea of the rough stuff?" he demanded sullenly. "I was sound asleep."

Daly looked at the gun. "Do you usually take one of these cap pistols to bed with you?" he asked serenely. "Now shut up. I haven't any time to fool with you."

Then Jimmy Daly proceeded to search the room. He pulled out bureau drawers and emptied them, he ransacked the closet and went through all the clothes he found hanging there. He

inspected the two suit cases, shook up the beddings, even looked under the rug, all the while keeping one eye on Stevens.

Finally Daly scratched his head in bewilderment. There was no trace anywhere of what he sought.

"I'll have you arrested for this," stormed Stevens. "Coming into a man's room and going through his personal belongings. It's breaking and entering—that's what it is—and you'll regret it."

"Maybe," said Daly absently.

It looked as if he were stumped. Yet he refused to give up.

"All right, you can turn around now," he said. "I want to talk to you."

Stevens faced about.

"What's the name of that big guy who was with Mrs. Swift's daughter?" Daly demanded.

Stevens grinned unpleasantly. "How the hell do you suppose I know?" he retorted.

"How do I suppose you know?" repeated Daly scornfully. "Listen, Stevens, I'm not blind. When you bumped into him there on the pier, your lips moved and so did his. It's a cinch you weren't singin' Christmas carols to each other."

"Blah!" snorted Stevens.

His eyes strayed to the gun, then away, then back again. Nor was it fear that held his gaze. Something about the weapon fascinated him.

Quick to notice such things, Jimmy Daly bit his lip. "Well, if you won't tell me that's all there is to it," he said resignedly. "I might as well be runnin' along, I suppose."

Stevens wet his lips with his tongue. "You might leave the gun," he suggested.

"And have you drill me goin' out?" asked Daly mildly. "What funny ideas you have!"

"But—but——" began Stevens, then fell silent.

"But what?"

"Nothing."

Daly looked at him narrowly. "Must be a valuable gun," he suggested.

Daly held it up and examined it. Idly he tapped at the stock with his forefinger, then struck it with a paper weight that lay on the table. A hollow sound resulted.

"Yes, it must be a valuable gun," repeated Daly softly.

He fumbled with the stock and presently found the combination. A side of the stock fell open, and the diamond pendant of Mrs. Swift was exposed, neatly tucked away in heavy cotton so that there might be no rattle.

Stevens' lips drew back from his teeth. He crouched like an animal about to spring.

"Steady," warned Jimmy Daly, coldly. "One jump and you'll be doin' a nose dive." He continued rapidly. "So you were the guy who opened the window at the White Eagle and took the pendant from that buddy of yours in Mrs. Swift's bunch, were you? I thought something was off color when you whispered to that man there on the pier.

"I was almost sure of it when you tried to crown me with the blackjack. You both sized me up for a dick, didn't you, and he told you to get me out of the way. But why didn't you light out when you got this pendant?"

He was trying to get Stevens to talk, but the man only compressed his lips and glowered angrily.

Daly went on: "I'll tell you why you didn't. Because you thought nobody had any brains but yourself. When you came to, on the bed there, you missed your tuxedo and figured I'd put it on to go to the White Eagle and keep an eye on Mrs. Swift. That meant that I considered you out of the picture, that I wouldn't connect you with this haul in any way.

"It was easy for you to throw on

some clothes, get the pendant through the window, and get back here before I did. And your little playmate at the White Eagle tried to stall for time for your get-away by directin' suspicion at me."

Still Stevens said no word.

Daly continued biting: "It wasn't so bad at that, but *you* didn't have the brains to dope out that I connect you up with the whole thing! What an ash can you are, Stevens."

In crookdom there is pride about such things, and the police have long since learned to play on that pride.

Stevens flushed hotly. "Where do you get that stuff!" he snapped. "I ran the whole thing. All Mason is good for is to do the high-society stuff. Now try and get me to admit that before witnesses."

"I don't have to," answered Daly. Grinning, he went to the door and opened it. A slim, calm-eyed man in a tan suit walked into the room.

Daly stared. "For cryin' out loud!" he exclaimed. "Are you the house man here?"

The detective smiled pleasantly. "Sure am, son. And I want to say you had me buffaloeed for a while. Didn't know whether you were in with this crew or not."

"But I'm not a detective," protested Daly.

"I know that. You ought to be, though. It was mighty good work. There'll be a few dollars coming for landing these birds and I'll be around to see that you get 'em." He was talking lightly, yet was closely watching Stevens. "Now let's take care of this bird, and then we'll go after the other one."

MRS. SWIFT was still at the White Eagle, just recovering from her hysteria. With her were several persons, one of the detectives whom Daly had upset, Mason, and Dorothy Swift.

As Daly and the hotel detectives looked in on them they were just preparing to leave.

Mason stared nervously as he saw them, but tried to carry through his bluff. "Here he is now!" he exclaimed, pointing at Daly. "Don't let——"

"Cut it!" commanded the hotel detective tersely. "You can talk it all over with the desk sergeant. Your friend is in jail now." He smiled at his fellow worker. "Hello, Bill. How about a lift with this guy?"

"But surely he hasn't done anything!" protested the dazed Mrs. Swift. "He is one of my guests."

The house detective smiled knowingly as he said:

"Sure he is, madam. He's probably been the guest of others, too. Good social recommendations and everything. I'll give you a full report on him later."

He motioned toward Jimmy Daly, as he handcuffed Mason to himself and started for the door. "In the meantime, this young man has something interesting to tell you."

As he drew the pendant from his pocket, Daly was aware of Dorothy Swift's inquiring gaze. He reddened.

"Here you are, Mrs. Swift," he said diffidently.

She gasped: "Oh, it's my pendant!" she breathed. Promptly she became lost in rapt contemplation of it.

Dorothy Swift moved nearer Daly. "You recovered this?" she asked.

He looked at the floor. "Well, maybe I helped a little," he said uncomfortably.

"You blessed boy!" Mrs. Swift broke in. "If you will come out to my yacht to-morrow morning, I will see that you are fully repaid for your trouble."

Daly straightened. "Mighty kind of you, Mrs. Swift," he said gently, "but I couldn't think of acceptin' anything. I had a lot of fun doin' it. But——"

He looked at Dorothy Swift as the band in the big room started playing

again repeating the number they had played earlier in the evening.

"I'll be watching and waiting
For my Palm Beach Rose——"

Yes, that was the name for her. Palm Beach Rose! To-morrow he would be on his way, roaming, he didn't know where. Romance, to a drifter, was brief, flitting; it came one moment and the next moment it was gone. Yet it would be something to look back on.

All things that happen in Palm Beach are that way. It wasn't as if he were

crashing the hardest social gate in the country; it was more as if he were a knight of old who had fought for a lady's favor and won it.

"But if I could have just one dance with you?" Daly said hesitantly.

Dorothy Swift's blue eyes were shining. She didn't even know the name of this graceful, gray-eyed young man, but that made no difference. It was a moment for youth.

"I've been hoping that you'd ask me," she said with an odd little laugh that was partly a sigh.

Another story about Jimmy Daly, Nomad, by Vic Whitman, will appear in our next issue.



GREYHOUND OF THE AIR

CARRYING sixty people, the *Graf Zeppelin* made the first transatlantic commercial air trip from Europe and return last year. On board was the first woman to travel by air westward from Europe.

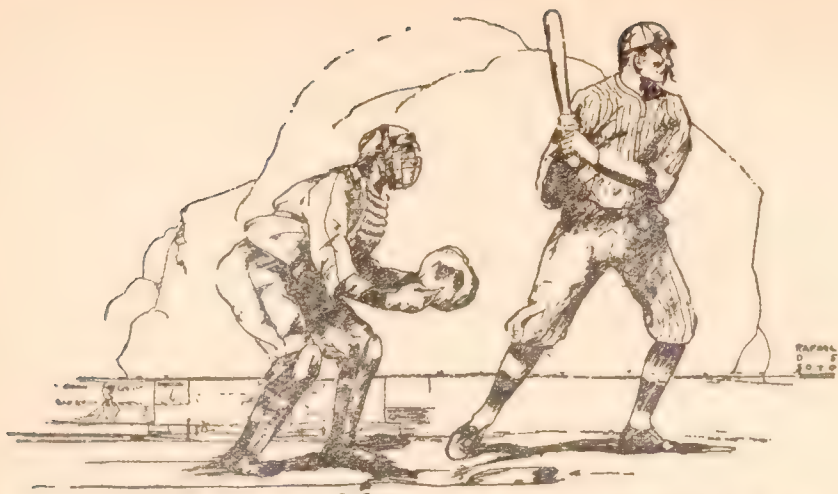
Only "one little mishap" marred the journey. This happened when the huge air craft plowed into a squall. Vertical air currents always are a feature of squalls. In an airplane, when one of these vertical air currents is met, the whole plane is lifted upward swiftly, or is dropped abruptly.

-- air liner the size of the *Graf Zeppelin* is affected in a different fashion. Because of her length, when the air current hit her, her bow was shoved violently upward. Her stern was depressed.

At the time, the passengers were in the dining room. Their plates slid; food jumped into their laps. To the control room of the big air liner, a lookout reported that the fabric of the port horizontal fin had been stripped away.

The damage to this important part of the ship had to be repaired at once. The fabric could not be replaced. With ropes around their waists, so that they would not fall into the clouds below, men fought the storm, fought fatigue and weariness, as they worked to patch and lash the torn fabric so that the damage would be checked.

"One little mishap" was the way the accident was described. Considering the size of the ship, the number of passengers on board, the distance traveled, the dangers faced and defeated, this one little mishap takes nothing from the marvelous achievement of this greyhound of the air.



English on the Ball

by Seaburn Brown A Humorous Baseball Story

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER I.

JOLLY EXERCISE.

SUPPOSE you asked a baseball manager what class of work he considered the toughest and most wearing on a human, and he clattered back: "The toil of a diplomat"—what would you do? Call a cop to shut the nut up before he hurt somebody—or would you light the proper brand of cigarette and be non-chalant?

What are baseball managers expected to know about League of Nation confabs and treaties and such? Nothing. Quite correct, Julius.

But I'm a manager of some distinction, including two warts on my nose and three pennants—and I've gone through something that makes me tip my kelly to the boys who fiddle with international problems, such as whether cruisers shall or shall not have hair triggers and four-ounce gloves on can-

non, and weigh more or less than Jess Willard.

For when Buford Tilt-Overton, the scourge of this horrible episode, first stalked into my august presence in July, he might as well have set upon me with a pair of tweezers and a pail of white-wash.

At that time I had such a mop of hair, I invited kidnaping whenever I passed a mattress factory; but by mid-September, because of Buford, my hair was sparse as moss on a dance floor—and that little was snow white.

Buford was an answer to a manager's prayer—in some ways. The Steelheads—my team in a snappy class-A league—had bogged down in mid-season, after a noble start, through hard luck. Our second baseman went out for the season in the month of June, with a broken leg, leaving a gap wider than a whale's grin in the infield.

We sloughed off game after game, dropping from third to sixth place in

the loop, while I scorched the insulation off the wires trying to buy a substitute. It seemed that good second basemen were as rare as three-legged roosters that summer. I was resigning myself to a second-division finish, when the following telegram crackled in from a bush manager who owed me a favor:

Am shipping by first-class mail, marked "use no hooks," a second sacker. Englishman. A phenom. Hits like the village blacksmith. Never muffs anything. Hasn't dropped a thing in this league but his h's. He'll do.

All prospects are great—until they're tried out. I'd been fooled many times. Yet I awaited the arrival of the overseas pastimer most anxiously and hopefully; for the author of the boastful wire was an old side-kick of mine, who seldom went wrong in sizing up horsehide live stock.

When I sighted the prospect at the depot, descending solemnly from the train, my spirits sank low enough to strike oil. Buford Tilt-Overton was, sure enough, a marvelous physical specimen—about six feet two, up and down, wide shouldered, deep chested, lean and springy from the waist down.

Somehow or other, though, his spark seemed to be retarded. Like an apartment house furnace he lacked fire. He was probably twenty-five, but he sported a fifty-year-old mustache—the droopy kind, wore a dollar-watch-sized wind-shield on one eye.

"I'm Luke Perkins," I glad-handed, "manager of the Steelheads. Welcome to our city, and all such piffle."

Slowly he extended a powerful hand. "Haw," he said.

I intrusted my flipper to his—and winced at the pressure he gave it. "Ready to play ball to-day, or d'you need a rest to get over your train ride?" I probed.

"Really, old fellow," he dragged out,

"I should rathaw enjoy a bit of jolly exawcise."

"Good!" I enthused. "We'll go right to the park. Game starts in half an hour."

We taxied to the park in less than ten minutes. It took Buford the remaining twenty, with overtime, to shift into a uniform.

NOW," I discoursed, when he was finally ready, "I'm going to shoot you right in at second. Don't worry in case you make errors. I don't expect a man to step out and do his best in his first game with a new team in a new league, after three days on a rattler. Just let yourself go. Don't be nervous."

"Haw," he responded. "I am not—aw—constitutionally nervaws."

He certainly wasn't! By the time he completed his grand march to his infield berth, the rest of the lads had dashed to their stations, flung the pellet around the diamond a dozen times, and unreeled volumes of pep chatter.

The catcher yelled, "Here, buddy!" and pegged the ball to him.

Buford let it go by without an effort to take it, and raised his eyebrows inquiringly. "Silly, what?" he commented. "Exchanging the bawl uselessly. The game hasn't stawted, y' know."

His attitude put a damper on the team. The boys looked him over, and at each other—disgustedly. Nothing puts a chill on a ball club like a lack of the old pepper. I tried to recall what I'd done to my bush-league friend to deserve such a trick.

Our opponents went to bat first. Buford appeared to be rehearsing an animal act—you know a horse can go to sleep on its feet—as the first batter wiggled his wand at the pitcher. The batter let a wide one go by—then belted one on the seams for a homer over the fence.

I watched Buford through the play. He didn't even turn his head!

The umps brought out a new ball. My gang tossed it around the field while the second slugger walked to the pan—but nobody shot it to the sleepy Britisher.

What I commenced to think about England would cause a war!

My pitcher was decidedly off form—such as he had. The second batter ripped a screamer to the shortstop. It was too hot to handle, shooting between his legs like a greased pig out of a cannon.

Buford was the only other man within range of the play. But he didn't take a step toward the ball. Instead—he flew. Both feet left the ground together. He zoomed headfirst into the ground, yards behind the shortstop. His hands and the hopping ball struck the dust at the same time.

The Englishman rolled over three times from the force of the violent dive. He came up on his feet—holding the ball!—and without seeming to look where he was flinging it, he fired the thing, fast and true as a rifle bullet, into the first baseman's mitt.

The crowd was knocked stiff and tongueless as a cigar-store Indian. Buford Tilt-Overton stood where he was a minute, as if the distance he had to walk back to his place was discouraging. He pulled out the monocle, clamped it on his eye, and surveyed his uniform; dusted it here and there with his cap. Then he strolled leisurely to his spot and lapsed into meditation.

The mob recovered breath and sprung the lid hinges of two thousand voice boxes.

I was beginning to like England!

The pitcher fanned a guy. The third and last batter bounced a mean grounder into the first sacker's territory. He had to run out to get it. The pitcher started a losing race with the runner for first.

Buford threw his long legs into high gear and streaked to the bag in time to snare the throw and beat the runner by five feet!

It dawned on me, in my pride and joy, that some of my ancestors were English.

Tilt-Overton came fifth in our batting list. He got his turn in the first canto, with two away and two on. He yawned at the first pitch—a high, fast one. The next, a wide bender, he also let go by. The pitching apparently was faster than the bush-league box work Buford had operated on in the past.

Out came the monocle. He rubbed it shiny on his sleeve and focused it on the twirler who let go with a twisty curve. Buford lazily put his bat clear behind him, and started his swing before the ball was a third of the way home.

And did he hit it? Goodness gracious, Agnes! If he didn't, then David missed Goliath. The old ashen ramrod, when it met the onion, bent like a buggy whip. According to radio dispatches received next day from South America, if the pill had managed to clear the Andes Mountains, it would've traveled around the world and hit Buford in the back of the head.

He hitched up his belt, calmly put his monocle back in a shirt pocket, and heel-and-toed round the circle, while the dumfounded spectators stood at attention, mouths open, so silent that the falling peanutshells rattled like hailstones on a tin roof.

CHAPTER II.

SOLICITAWS.

EVER since that hour, I've had a warm spot in my heart for the English, who after all are the four-bears of this country, so to speak. I had no way of knowing what was going to happen, and the force of circumstances obliged me to hang on, as the guy explained after he grabbed the grizzly by the tail.

Buford Tilt-Overton made good with the fans right there. He was ace high with the world in general when he ambled off the field at the end of the game, and joker and deuces wild with me. A real discovery, if there ever was one! He won the battle for us with additional breath-taking fielding and a .1000 average with the wand.

In a few days we got used to his peculiarities. He wouldn't talk on the field—wouldn't make a move unless necessary. But when it became necessary, he was a movie star.

Off the field, he hadn't much to say either—and nothing whatever concerning himself. Customarily, when spoken to, he'd respond by twisting one of his weeping-willow mustaches, or adjusting his half-portion spectacles, and remarking, "Haw." He wasn't highbrow; just sort of self-contained and close-mouthed.

As he said so little, I was considerably surprised one day when Buford came to me, emitted a series of timid "Haws," and requested a private talk.

"Y' know, old chap," he opened, "I have been sought out by solicitaws."

"Is that all?" I was relieved. "What brand of solicitors? Oil-stock salesmen—or what? Chase 'em away if they bother you."

"Haw!" he coughed. "I'm rathaw upset, 'pon my soul. These chappies are lawyahs, y' know. In England we call 'em solicitaws. I've been jolly well secretive, as y've no doubt observed, about myself, and all that. I'm—aw—a younger son, don't y' know."

"What of it?" I jabbed, more and more at sea. "I'm the youngest in my family, too; but that condition is jake with me."

"Haw!" he floundered. "I—I nevaw meant to reveal this, old bean: I'm a neah relative of the late Earl of Eke. In England, the younger son, by custom, inherits little. Titles, and estates, and such jolly twaddle pass to eldah

sons. For that reason I—aw—came to America to make my own way, becoming a bally bawl playah.

"Now, these solicitaws advise me that an unfawtunate accident—an airplane crashing and killing several persons, including the Earl of Eke, his only son, and a cousin or so of mine—has left me a cleah title to the name and estates of the Earl of Eke."

I didn't know whether I should congratulate him on his good fortune, or sympathize with him because of the tragic deaths. I kept still.

"I haven't seen any of the poor victims in yeals," Buford went on to explain.

"Then you won't feel too cut up over it," I cracked; "and it's going to be a great thing for the team, having a real, honest-to-spinach earl playing second base!"

Then it happened. "Haw," he gulped, reddening. "Really, y' know, I'm not proud. I love the jolly sport. But I cawn't considah myself alone. Y' know, it isn't the thing for an earl to—aw—play basebawl professionally. Disgrace to the family and traditions, and so forth. Really, I must—aw—resign."

Spots floating before the glims, and other symptoms of an outraged liver, assailed me. Five weeks of the season remained. We were out in front by the breadth of a frog hair, thanks to the Englishman's punch—and up to that moment we'd been on the inside track for the old bunting. Without him, it would be just too bad.

"Suppose," he essayed to cheer me, "we disband as a bawl team and play polo? It's a more—aw—aristocratic game."

"Who're those lawyers?" I woke up. "I wanta see 'em."

"My notice," he said, "is from Mr. Jonathan Whingle, of the firm of Whingle, Whingle, Whingle, Whingle & Whingle."

"I should catch one of 'em in," I gritted, and lit out.

A BLONDE typewriter petter kept guard in the outer office.

"I'd like to see Jonathan Whingle," I demanded, "or, if he isn't on deck, any of the dittoes."

"He's in—if your business is important," she missed a stroke on her gum to say.

I made a noise like a bootlegger with something just off a boat—and she let me right into the attorney's den. Jonathan—a fat turtle with fox's eyes in a pig's face—looked glum when he learned that I'd faked a pass and plunged through center. But he listened to me.

"It's true regarding Buford Tilt-Overton," he canted. "His lordship, I presume we should say now. Our English correspondents have established his rights beyond question."

"All right," I cawed. "All right. Still—isn't there any way to put this thing off for five weeks, until the season's over? If the Britisher leaves right now, we'll finish farther down than a rammed submarine."

"Well?" he said, and squinted his eyes.

"Tilt-Overton contracted to play the full season with us. We're entitled to his services. I don't blame him for his ideas on family pride; but I don't see how it can hurt him to put off catching a boat for a few weeks."

"Well?" he repeated in a cagy tone.

"It must take some time for all red tape to be unraveled in straightening out the old earl's affairs," I plunged.

"Perhaps." He pursed his lips.

"You'll do us a great favor," I pressed, "by advising the new earl that about a month of legal hemming and hawing has to be gone through before he can assume personal charge of his inheritance. You do that for us—and I'll guarantee the owners of the Steel-

heads will gladly pay you for your trouble with a fat check for a grand."

"Ah," he brightened. "Quite possible. Yet—what can you do to overcome the earl's fear of tradition?"

"Easy," I explained. "Everybody knows the old earl has kicked off. But nobody in America knows the new noble is our ball player. He can continue to play till the season's over, and nobody'll know he's an earl; so he won't be hurting his own feelings or anybody else's."

"Very well," bowed the lawyer; "you can count on me."

Buford agreed to my proposal almost eagerly. He sure was a good scout.

"Capital!" was his O. K. "Jolly scheme. 'Pon my soul, y'u know, I'd be keen for the bally game, and continue as a playah even awfter I become officially a beastly earl, y' see, if I had only myself to considah. The weight of centuries is on me, don'cha know."

"I'm hep," I chimed happily. "I feel your point keenly, as the victim wailed to the wasp. But why talk about it? Our worries are over."

"Quite so, old fruit," he beamed. "And since this next month must be my lawst, I shall strain every blasted sinew to make it my best. Really, it should be jolly fun, playing incognito."

"Incognito!" I backed off. "Not by a crock of banana oil! You're going to keep on playing second base."

"Tut, tut," he grinned. "Incognito means unknown—means I hide my true identity. As Shakespeare said, an earl by any othaw name can swat as sweetly."

And now his lordship did set out to wind up his career! He broke fielding and base-running records, which had held office since the first Cleveland administration. And his batting! That busting Britisher could put more English on a baseball than Hoppe can on a billiard sphere.

In the next fortnight—which is the nickname for two weeks—his daily activities gave the pennant race the aspect of seven one-hoss shays chasing an eight-cylinder car. His fame spread faster than a Hollywood scandal.

Big-league scouts looked up our burg on the map, hired native guides, and moved in on us by the score.

What a boom! Beds were rented by the square foot. For the first time since the county fair, the leading hotel lit the extra burner on the kitchen range.

Buford Tilt-Overton, as he stalked down the street to the parks each p. m. was trailed by small boys, and pointed to with as much awe as if he'd had six toes on each foot, and a glass eye.

The American League "Marines" opened the bidding with a mention of fifty thousand dollars, in chilled cash, for Buford, delivery to be made at the close of our season. A National League outfit, in a shrill falsetto that rang round the world, hoisted the ante by ten grand.

CHAPTER III.

NO GENTLEMAN!

THE Steelhead directors cared no more for a dingy dollar than a convict cares for a pardon—and they needed the money. Furthermore, Buford was too good for our circuit. We cramped his style.

But we couldn't sell him. Firmly—and sorrowfully—the directors rejected all offers, giving cooked-up reasons. The club president shed tears enough to drown a duck, mourning the coin he couldn't accept. He inflicted a pain in the neck on me.

"You can't expect everything, even in hash," I rebuked. "We're getting plenty out of it—winning the bunting, crowding the parks with the biggest mobs you ever saw, and nabbing national publicity. Quit moaning."

"Perkins," he responded prayerfully,

"you've got more twists in your brain than a nervous worm. Can't you persuade the earl to stay with baseball, so we can sell him? Man! The fact that he has a title would slap another ten or twenty thousand on his price!"

"Chief," I blathered, "I'll be tickled to do any simple little problem for you, such as inventing a wireless barbed wire fence, if you'd like to take one before meals. But this Englishman's got me down."

"I suppose it's impossible," he drooled. "Remember, though—if you can do it, ten thousand dollars of his sale price will be yours."

"Thanks a lot," I snorted. "In case you've spoken rashly, chief, I'll sell you back your offer for a five-dollar meal ticket, half punched out."

"I guess, then," he moored, shaking his head, "things couldn't be worse." He heaved a sigh so deep it busted a shoe lace, and crawled away to grieve.

There was only one detail amiss in the chief's parting remark: He was wrong. Up to that time, I had labored under the delusion that the worst luck a man can have is to bluff a four-card flush against a guy with a stout heart and a full house—a childish notion.

I'd rather stake both lungs and a yard of spinal cord against a free hair cut, on the foregoing odds, than to contend versus a lawyer armed with a force-feed lubricated brain and the dollar sign in both eyes. To wit, and as follows:

The morning paper, next day, did everything to me—and more—than the fast-mail train did to the brave but injudicious bull. Column one, page one, yelled to whom it might concern:

LOCAL BASEBALL STAR IS ENGLISH EARL IN DISGUISE

Buford Tilt-Overton, sensational second baseman, bears ancient name of Earl of Eke

And so on—I suppose—for I never read the column of dynamite under the headlines. The type was black; I could see nothing but red. Probably I went goofy. Statements of reliable witnesses have it that when reporters, dragging Buford with them, broke down my front door, I was absorbed in a quarrel with the cat over pronunciation of the Spanish alphabet.

By slow degrees, each degree accomplished by dosing me with a table-spoonful of water, diluted with half a cup of Scotch essence of snicker, they restored me to a condition only rifle-shot distance from normal.

"Now, Mr. Perkins," commenced a reporter, "we want to know——"

"Who th' hell," I blasted "gave you that story?"

"Never mind," he rattled; "we want to know——"

"Since the cat's out of the ice box," I rapped him, "I'll tell you whatever you want to know. But first, you tell me who cracked that yarn. Otherwise, I'm a clam with diphtheria."

The reported weakened. He realized I wasn't kidding.

"Forget who told you this," he whispered warningly. "A lawyer sold the tip to our paper. Jonathan Whingle, of Whingle, Whingle, Whi——"

"Save the echoes!" I shrieked. "Lemme out of here! I have a duty to perform!"

"Remember your promise!" slashed the reporter, clutching my coat tail.

"Haw!" came from Buford. "May as well respond to queries, old bean. Beastly mess, y' know. Rotten deal. I shall, of course, arrange pawsage for England immediately. Impossible to continue, now, to be sure. Wot?"

Just what I expected and right on schedule.

I folded up in a chair and confessed all. There was nothing else to do. But as soon as they'd pumped me dry, there was plenty to do. I set out to do it!

JONATHAN WHINGLE evidently was expecting me. The blonde stenographer had locked the door of the outer office. I backed up in the hall to get a start, sprinted in good form, took off nicely, flew ten feet through the air, and planted two feet squarely over the keyhole.

Brethren, I knocked that lock so dead that only a skeleton key would venture near it! The blonde Venus squalled frightfully as I sailed into the room and landed, sitting, on the rug.

But she wasn't alone, this trip. She scuttled for safety behind the broad back of one of the toughest-looking thugs that ever manhandled a gorilla.

"Beat it, bo!" rasped the guard.

If I'd been in my right mind, which isn't more'n eighty per cent right at the best, I'd 've gone out of that joint faster'n I'd come in.

The guard was built like the Brooklyn Bridge, only stronger. If his own mother had ever loved his face, she must have been a self hypnotist. But at the moment, I would gladly have tried to chop down the marine corps with a plush hatchet.

"Git!" he growled, "before I have t' swing on you. And when I swing and less'n two bones break, guy, I count it a miss."

"Outa my way—bum!" I raged, and started for the door to my meat's private office.

Whereupon, he let go. I beat him to the punch, breaking a knuckle on his granite beak. His paw connected with my jaw, rattling teeth around like hazelnuts in a wash boiler, and knocking me end over end.

I hadn't a show with that giant. I weaved to my pins, hazy as the Einstein theory. I was afraid of breaking an arm if I hit him again. He lunged for me. I side skipped, dodging the full force of the wallop, but taking a slicing slap that flung me across the blonde's desk.

I kept from falling clear over the desk by grabbing the typewriter. The thug whirled, and tore at me. The jane thoughtfully shattered a bottle of ink on my conk. I staggered back, holding the typewriter in frozen fingers.

Instinct—that noble old Roman who helps us guys who haven't too much intellect—volunteered as my chief second. I raised the heavy machine above my head and, as the brute closed in, crashed it on his cranium.

That was the first and only time I ever used a typewriter. And I made good: I wrote "out" across that bimbo's beetling brow, pretty as you please! I gazed thankfully at his flattened chassis.

"Young lady," I addressed the frightened female, "there will now be a brief pause for station announcements. Is Jonathan Whingle in his office, and if so, is that glass door locked?"

"He's out," she trebled, "and the door's locked."

"Better unlock it," I suggested. "I could crack a safe with these thirteen-inch feet of mine."

"You're no gentleman!" she shrieked.

"Neither is your Great-aunt Lulu," I yowled, launching into my hop, skip and thud operation on the inner door. There was nothing Scotch about that flimsy barrier, for it gave very generously, spilling me and fragments of itself, here and there in Jonathan Whingle's sanctum.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRIMES.

THE law shark, shrinking behind his desk, flashed a look in which fear and fury were battling a fast draw.

"Stop, ruffian!" he bleated, as I came out of my huddle and bared the remnants of my front teeth. "I'll have the law on you!" He brandished a sheet of paper. "Already I've jotted down the crimes you've committed," he

fumed: "Housebreaking, damage to property, assault, threats against life, abusive language, disturbing the peace and——"

"Rat!" I foamed, "you should've headed the list with murder!" And I proceeded to operate on the principle that a knuckle in the eye is worth a dozen in the butcher-shop show case. Whingle fought like a cornered coyote.

I floored him three times, hand running. Then he held the advantage a few fleeting seconds, owing to the fact that he hurled a wicked paper weight. Finally, I got inside his whirling arms and cuddled my thumbs in and about his windpipe.

From then on the jamboree was as one-sided as a billboard; and what I did to that baby would sadden a sausage grinder. The jane, who had taken time out of the game to faint, recovered half of her wits and all of her voice, and howled the other Whingles out of their dens to the rescue.

With my right sleep producer working beautifully, I took 'em like polite people eat eggs—one at a time—as they plunged through the doorway. Each one needed a single punch, right on the old button.

Before leaving the slumbering firm, I located the paper on which Jonathan had jotted my crimes, and wrote across the bottom of it: "File these charges against me, you snake—and I'll *get mad!*"

Evidently Jonathan Whingle and brothers didn't feel it would be good for me to lose my temper, for no warrant was served.

I taxied home and got under a shower bath of liniment, then thought myself into a headache. It was certain that the Whingles, for revenge on me if nothing else, would urge the earl off to England on the first scow.

If only an earl could play ball! If only it was fashionable! If only we had earls in America, and dukes and

such, who were ball players! The Earl of Eke would be proud to play with 'em. If only—— At that point, my churning ideas struck pay dirt, way down deep in the old boneyard! I'm that way: I get those flashes of inspiration. I had another one, in 1906.

I telephoned the depot. A train was leaving in ten minutes. I snatched my pinch-hitting Sox and toothbrush and threw 'em into the grip. Wildly, I searched for my shirt. I discovered I had it on. I set out. I had to chase the train—but I caught it.

I hadn't known where the train was going. It didn't matter—there are bush ball teams every place. During that day and the morning of the next, I treated fourteen ball crews to the once over. My specifications were brief, but difficult to meet: I had to have a player who looked highbrow and could speak library English and eat peas with a fork.

At last I found him. He was a terrible ball player, but he looked as aristocratic as a peacock in a flock of crows. Nobody in his family had split an infinitive in four generations, and he told me his uncle had disowned a daughter because she married a guy who once used a double negative on a trick can-opener salesman.

I bought him, to the relief of his manager. On the way back to town, I rehearsed him in his rôle.

"Fleming," I said—his name was Waldemar Fleming—"I'm paying you to pass yourself off as the Duke of Denver."

"But——"

"I know," I chattered, "America has no nobility. But this Englishman I've been telling you about hasn't made any life study of our customs. Colorado must have a titled nobility—so far as he's concerned. See?"

"You're the Duke of Denver. And it's fashionable for Colorado nobles to play baseball. Get that? Furthermore, your family is one of the proudest: you

can trace your ancestry clear back to the day Columbus spied the first Duke of Denver swinging by his tail in a tree."

"Very well," he shrugged. "I shall practice the deception."

Fleming and I found Buford packing his baggage—he called it luggage—in his room. I shoved Fleming in ahead of me.

"Your lordship," I snaggled, "shake hands with our new utility man, the Duke of Denver. He's also the Viscount of Vin Rouge." With that, I backed out and left 'em together.

WHEN I dared poke my head above water, in the dining room at dinner, the Earl of Eke and the Duke of Denver were parked so close to one another they could have scooped their groceries off the same plate. Buford beckoned joyfully.

"Perkins, old onion," he trilled, "the trip home is—ah—postponed, y' know. I'll carry on till the bally season's ovah. Really! I've learned that to play basebawl ovah heah is to be right in the social bawth don'cha know."

"Social bath?" I stumbled.

"He means, in the social swim," horned in Fleming. "As I've enlightened our English friend, baseball is quite the fad this year."

"And the neatest, sweetest little fad that ever fadded!" I chimed deliriously, and struck up a triumphant march, in the key of C, on my soup.

Even the club president quit moaning over the loss of Buford's sale price as the schedule shrank to its final week. Our Britisher's title was enough to fill the parks so that the fences bulged out bumpy, like a sack of walnuts. On top of that, he had every rival pitcher sitting up and barking, on command.

We gained ground like a foreclosed mortgage, nosing into a half-game lead with the finish four stanzas away. The nobility hokum was tough to handle

but I got away with it. I coached every man on the team to call Fleming a duke, in private when Buford was in hearing—and to forget it in public. The play had to be on Buford alone; the newspapers would have spilled the beans in a minute had they gotten wind of the fake.

Now and then, when a game was safely sewed up, I put Fleming into a game, to keep up appearances. I guess he should've been a real duke—he sure wasn't worth a whoop at anything else.

As a testimonial of gratitude to the Earl of Eke, the club directors staged a field day for him when we opened our last four-game series against the second-place Terriers. He was led to the plate, adorned around the neck with a huge floral horseshoe, and presented with a beautiful jeweled watch.

Hot dog! The ceremony over, everybody happy, the boys squared away for the ball game. Buford and Fleming, who were inseparable as the hole and the doughnut, stood side by side, awaiting their turns at bat.

CHAPTER V.

LORD OF THE HOOSEGOW.

IT was a warm day—but all at once I felt a chill. I looked around for the cause. I lamped it, perched in a front-row box in the grand stand. It was none other than Jonathan Whingle, of Whin—— But I've got no time for that. He was feeding an icy stare to me, and talking out of the side of his mouth to a little sawed-off bird with an expression like a bad check.

The little guy nodded comprehendingly, then quick stepped out to me.

"Beat it!" I rapped. "Only players allowed here."

He snorted and flashed a sheriff's badge.

"I'll allow myself," he gritted. "I think I see the guy I want to talk to."

He strode to Fleming and touched his shoulder.

"You Waldemar Fleming" he taxed him.

"Yes," Fleming admitted, and turned pale.

"Well," gabbled the sheriff, "you're pinched." He unfurled a nasty-looking paper. "This here's a warrant for your arrest on complaint of your wife, for desertion and nonsupport."

Buford bristled. "Heah, my good man," he cut in, "go easy. This gentleman is the Duke of Denvah—and my friend."

The sheriff took a short count. He'd never heard that one before!

"Yah!" he sneered. "Also, I'm the Crown Prince of Connecticut, and Baron of Boston—only I don't work at it except Sundays. Meanwhile, I'm the Grand Keeper of the Keys and Lord of the Hoosegow. Come on, buddy, or I'll slap the bracelets on you."

Fleming threw me a despairing glance, and threw up the sponge.

"I'm not a duke, Buford," he confessed. "I'm a fraud. There aren't any American dukes—not even in Colorado."

"But we do have cattle kings," contributed the sheriff genially.

"And I have a wife," Fleming groaned. "But we long since agreed to disagree, and go our separate ways. She doesn't give a darn where I am. Somebody's talked her into this—paid her to go through with it."

That was it! The skunk lawyer, honing for vengeance, had sneaked around—probably eavesdropped on the earl and the "duke"—and fished up my secret. Then he'd gone back over Fleming's trail, looking for dirt.

Fleming trudged off the field, followed by the sheriff. After all, he had nothing to worry about. Whingle would have him turned loose before night, now that the damage was done.

But Buford—— I stole a peek at his

face: his haughty glance went over my head and topped the flagpole by yards.

"I'm sorry," I mewed weakly. "I meant no harm. I only intended to —" He walked right out on me.

Pondering vaguely in my mind a prediction by a fortune teller that I was born to be hanged, I carefully selected a heavy, straight-grained bat, and stalked into the stands. But Jonathan Whingle had vanished.

I TURNED over the team for the afternoon to Harry Riley, a sort of assistant, and scampered to the hotel to corral Buford. There wasn't a chance in a million to persuade him to play out the series—but I had to do something.

His room door was locked. I pounded.

"Who's theah?" he bawled.

"Me!" I miscued.

"I won't see you," he stormed. "I have arranged pawsage by the next boat. I'm through."

"Then you will see me," I came back, "or miss the boat. When you open the door I'll be here."

So the siege began. All afternoon I sat in the hall, my spine against the door. Inside, all was dead silence. A bell hop brought word that we had lost the game, and were now half a game out of the lead.

I sent for pillows and a blanket, and slept all night in the hall. The door opened outward; Buford couldn't give me the sneak without waking me. Luckily, our hotel lacked a fire escape.

In the morning I ate breakfast back to back with the door.

"The gent inside," I directed, "isn't hungry."

Early afternoon came. I called for Riley, told him to run the team and do his dangdest without me. He showed up three hours later to regale me with the ghastly news that the team had been trimmed again. Game and a half behind and two games to play!

"We're just outa luck without Buford," Riley crabbed. "The gang performs like a squad of undertaker's apprentices at dress rehearsal. Unless we get him out there to-morrow, we'll be trimmed again, like a Christmas tree."

"I'm trying to starve him out," I gloomed hopelessly. "Send up the evening papers to keep me company."

He sent 'em, and I settled down to read all night long. Midnight arrived, but stayed only a second. I read on. It must've been near onto four o'clock when I found myself mechanically reading the same item of news over for the third time. It was about England. A couple of sentences in it stood out as though the letters were on stilts. Thusly:

Many of England's great landowners are in sore financial straits because of the high post-war taxes. Indeed, several great estates which had been passed from father to son for generations, have been sold for the sole reason that their former owners could not continue to meet the tax burden.

I read no further. I howled for the bell hop. I ordered a ham sandwich and held it to the keyhole.

"Wake up and sniff at the keyhole," I invited Buford. "It's ham—real ham, off a genuine pig."

Buford gave in and opened the door a whisker. I pushed in. And what he committed on that sandwich proved that the stomach is quicker than the eye.

"Now," I proposed, "we'll have a real breakfast right in your room. You'll have five hours to eat before we visit your lawyers."

"For what purpose?" he gargled. "I am firm. I go to England forthwith, y' know."

"Sure—but get the low-down first, Buford. Look before you leap and get seasick. If I were you, I'd demand that the Whingle tribe show you the messages they've had from England concerning your inheritance."

He looked suspicious.

"No trick in it," I assured hm. "I'm not saying anything about playing baseball. I'd just like to go along with you. But when you phone for the appointment, don't mention that I'm coming—they'd hide out."

WELL, at nine o'clock Buford Tilt-Overton, Earl of Eke, blew into the Whingle reception office. I came behind him so close we did the lock-step. The blonde jane eyed me, got up, and slammed on her hat.

"Pardon me, big boy," she crooned. "I'm going out for a bullet-proof raincoat. I think I know where one is—eleven miles from here."

We invaded Jonathan's den. He screeched, dived through a window, and missed death in a ten-story fall by an ankle. I caught the ankle and hauled him back in.

"I won't hurt you if you play nice," I purred. "My friend here, the earl, wants to paw over the papers from England."

"Why—why, yes," he spluttered, dragging out a mass of junk from a desk drawer. Buford rigged his monocle and waded in. He riffled through half a dozen letters without comment.

But the seventh glued right onto his spyglass. He ejaculated "Haw!" three times in one breath—evidence of extreme excitement—chewed his mustache, and jammed the sheet at me.

I could've howled in joy at what it said:

While the title to the estate, in Buford Tilt-Overton's favor, is without a cloud, the estate itself is considerably involved financially. In fact, it is impossible for us, under the circumstances, to advance money to him at this time; and in all likelihood the new earl will be obliged to assume debts total-

ing in the neighborhood of twenty thousand pounds.

His right of accession to the title is, we repeat, clear. Only in the event of his death, or his refusal to accept the inheritance, would the title and estate pass to the next in line, his second cousin, David Wooderman.

Buford mopped his tall brow. He glared at the mumbling lawyer.

"Haw!" he yelled. "I am to be plunged into debt! I, who can earn thousands of dollahs per annum pawstimming basebawlically. Haw! You've with'eld this infawmation to injure your enemy—my managaw!"

"There's—er—your second cousin, David Wooderman, you know. Buford," I put in. "David would pinch hit for you in the spats and top-hat league. You can horn in on a big slice of your sale price to a bigger ball club. You'll get a boost in salary. Incidentally, I'll get ten thousand, if you stick, and——"

So suddenly that Jonathan dodged, Buford caught up a fountain pen, jerked a chair to the desk, captured a scrap of paper, and scribbled furiously.

"Heah," he explained, "is a message going by cable to-day, care of the London solicitaws to my second cousin." It was short and to the point:

David, old tulip, I hereby officially renounce all rights to the title and estate of the late twelfth Earl of Eke. You take the marbles, as we jolly Americans slang it. I have a higher title, anyway. Really. I'm the silly old Sultan of Swat.

"And now," concluded the beaming disinherited nobleman, "let us repair to the park and win those blawsted bawl games and the nobby old pennant. Wot?"

We did!

More humorous sport stories by Seaburn Brown will appear in this magazine. Do you enjoy his contributions? Write to the editors and "speak your mind" about 'em.





The Smear

IN the Malemute Saloon in Dawson the lights blazed. There was noisy music, whisky and gambling—all the sourdoughs' dearest joys. Outside it was dark, with the first breath of the Yukon winter in the north wind.

"Finn Charley" lugged out a heavy poke and poured a couple of ounces of gold dust into the pan of the scales on the bar. He had become suddenly prosperous and he intended to celebrate.

Two members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police entered. The constable took his post at the door, but the corporal walked forward until he stood under the first of the hanging lights, and his keen eyes searched the company, missing no man.

Finn Charley flinched, the broad nostrils of his flat nose twitched, and his lashless yellow eyes flickered uneasily. Then he gulped down a glass of raw whisky, coughed, and straightened. He knew the man was dead. Nobody had

seen him. He was safe if he did not betray himself.

When all eyes were upon him, the corporal spoke in a clear voice. "Boys, a man was robbed and murdered on the Klondike Trail to-night, a mile out of town."

Again Finn Charley felt a wild impulse to escape. But the eyes of the corporal held the room. He must do as the others did. With an unmeaning grin upon his face, Finn Charley swaggered up to join the half-circle collecting around the policeman.

The light illumined all their faces, while the corporal, under the lamp, was in shadow. His steady glance rested upon each in turn. The grin remained upon Finn Charley's face, but under it his jaws were tight.

"The man was not quite dead when we found him," said the corporal slowly, and paused.

Finn Charley's broken finger nails were pressing into the palms of his hands, but he did not feel them. He



by John Beames

was wishing the man would go on talking.

"He said a few words before he died," said the corporal, and paused again.

IN the tense half-circle, nobody breathed. Finn Charley felt himself choking. Sweat started out on his forehead. The cold penetrating glance of the corporal passed from face to face and back again.

"He had been shot from behind," he went on. "But the man who fired the shot turned him over on his face to frisk him. He pretended he was dead, but he saw——"

Finn Charley shot a lightning glance over his shoulder. There were men on each side of him. Immediately in his rear two men had climbed on chairs for a better view. He must stand still or arouse suspicion.

"The light was not very good, but he saw one thing clear," went on the slow, steady voice, each word like a hammer blow.

"He said to me, and they were the last words he spoke"—the restless eyes flickered upon Finn Charley's face, passed on and returned—"he said to me, 'Find the man with a big black smear on his left cheek.'"

All unconsciously, Finn Charley's hand shot up to his cheek.

"In the King's name!" cried the corporal, and leaped upon him.

The constable at the door flung forward. The handcuffs clicked. Fighting like a maniac and yelling hoarsely, Finn Charley was dragged away.

At the Mounted Police post, they found upon him the old silver monogrammed watch of the dead man.

"But," said the constable later, "I don't understand yet how you did it. When we reached the poor devil he was stone dead. He never said a word. How did you know the murderer had a smear on his face?"

"I didn't," said the corporal. "And besides, the murderer had no smear on his face."



Law of the Hills

by Otwell Binns

Part III

JANET CRAYDON and her cousin, "Husky" Craydon, came to Shanghai in search of the girl's father, Eliot Craydon, who had disappeared eleven years before after his wife had been murdered on Rossal Island. Evidently under the influence of a great fear, the father had written that he was fleeing with his young daughter, the sister of Janet Craydon, to a city of refuge. Recently, news of a white man in such a city had come to the cousins.

In Shanghai, Husky Craydon got into a brawl, from which he was rescued by an American, Nick Shervington, who was down and out. The wealthy Janet Craydon hired Shervington to lead an expedition into Tibet in search of her father and sister.

Shervington soon found out that for some unknown reason the expedition was violently opposed by an Eurasian, the head of a powerful tong, whose European name was Doctor Stargard. Several times Shervington barely escaped being knifed to death.

Shervington headed his party for Che-to, a village near the gate of Tibet. Here he enlisted the help of an old friend of his, Nima-Tashi, a native who knew Lhasa, the forbidden land of Tibet. Nima-Tashi had heard the tale of a white man and a girl secluded in Lhasa. He agreed to guide the expedition.

Meantime, Shervington, his every step menaced by unrecognized enemies, had found

that Husky Craydon was a coward and untrustworthy. Also, that Craydon wanted to marry his cousin, Janet, and was jealous of Shervington.

The Tibetan, Nima-Tashi, brought Craydon in drunk. He had been talking to a Chinese, probably one of Stargard's spies.

CHAPTER XVI.

FOOL OR KNAVE?

NIMA-TASHI seated himself on one of the three stools the room boasted, lit a cigarette of a vile quality, and then looked at Shervington inquiringly. He voiced his question:

"The whole tale hath not been told?"

"No, my friend, but it shall be now."

Shervington began the account of his first meeting with "Husky" Craydon and of the events that had followed, dwelling at length on the story of Eliot B. Craydon's flight from civilization and on the mysterious Doctor Stargard's interest in the Craydons and himself. He detailed carefully all that had happened since he, himself, had left Shanghai.

The Tibetan listened in silence till the end. He grunted when Shervington mentioned Doctor Stargard's Chinese name.

When the narrative ended, Nima-Tashi remained silent, an absorbed look in his eyes. While the American awaited his comment, the drunken man on the sleeping boards stirred uneasily; and in his slumber muttered words that were audible to Shervington.

"She won't—she won't—but——"

That the words related to Janet Craydon the listener had no doubt, but he gave them little attention. His interest was in Nima-Tashi, whose silence was prolonged. Finally, Shervington was moved to spur him to speech.

"Well? What do you think of it all, Nima?"

"I think that you are lucky to have reached Tachienlu alive, my friend," answered the Tibetan gravely. "It is a long way from Shanghai; and the chances of the river are many, so many that I wonder they have not been taken.

"Also, that is a strange tale of the man who fled across the seas and up the great river to hide himself in a lamasery. There is more yet that is untold. Why did he flee?"

"I have told you what happened to his unhappy wife, and that he himself was evidently in peril as was his girl child."

"Aye. But from whom did he flee?"

"That I do not know, but I have wondered about this Stargard——"

"I have heard of him," interrupted Nima-Tashi. "I have heard of him under his Chinese name—Hong Chung Lu. It is a name of a hidden power from Tachienlu to Shanghai. If he is your enemy, then I do not understand how you have escaped him."

"You don't think I have evaded him then?"

The Tibetan grunted. "The fly may think it is breaking through the web when new threads are weaving round

it. Hong Chung Lu is very cunning! How if it were his will that those two and you should come to Tachienlu?"

"But he tried to bribe me to leave the Craydons——"

"Aye; but how if then he did not know that you were to come hither? How, if it came to him that you three were pointers to something on which his heart was set?"

"But what——"

"That man who fled across the seas to become a lama in the Dze-Chu lamasery, or the girl child for whom the man feared."

"I have thought of that," answered Shervington in a troubled voice. "Also I have thought that he may have set his heart on the girl who is at your brother's house."

Nima-Tashi made a gesture of agreement. Then, as the tipsy man on the sleeping boards stirred again, reiterating drunkenly in his sleep the words he had previously spoken, he looked toward him, and asked abruptly: "What does that pig say?"

Shervington translated; and the other sat for a moment in thought, then asked: "These two cousins, are they to mate?"

"That is the man's desire!"

"And the woman's?"

"I think not."

"Those words, then——" Nima broke off, considered the tipsy man thoughtfully, and then commented: "It is strange that he should drink arak with a Chinese rat who listens in the doorways!"

"He is a fool," said Shervington bitterly.

"Aye! And a fool is always dangerous. When he drinks he is a sieve out of which secrets drop."

"You think the Chinaman was really trying to learn things in the doorway there; and from Craydon?"

"A man does not listen like a mouse in a hole for nothing. Neither does

he flee from his arak if his soul is innocent."

"You forget, Nima. You had scared him, and at the sight of you——"

"Aye," laughed the Tibetan. "There is something in that. He was afraid, maybe, that I should stretch his ears till they were like the ears of an ass. Nevertheless, why did he seek that man there or why did that man seek out him?"

"Oh, I don't know," answered Shervington, with a touch of impatience. "Possibly because that fool there is just a fool."

Nima-Tashi did not dissent. He stared thoughtfully at the smoky fire for a moment, then he said: "Before daybreak in the morning it will be well for you three to leave Tachienlu."

"But where shall we go? Not to Dze-Chu, surely, so quickly?"

"To my house at Che-to. It is on the caravan road, and you can lie secret there while I gather the stores. I will take you there in the morning, if now you will write a message for that girl who lies at my brother's house. The baggage I will send by yak to-night. In the morning you shall leave the inn by a secret way."

To Shervington, the Tibetan's suggested precautionary measures were convincing. Nima-Tashi, unlike many Tibetans, was not the man to run from a fight.

It was clear to Shervington that his friend linked Doctor Stargard with the tragedy on Rossal Island and the man up in the mountainous waste of Dze-Chu spending his days in prayer; haunted, perhaps, by fears of that from which he had fled.

Further, wild as it was, the possibility of the eavesdropper, with whom Husky Craydon had drunk, being in the service of Stargard, was not to be ignored. Any place that would hide them from spying eyes was a place to run to at the earliest moment.

He answered at once. "We will go to your house at Che-to, when you will, Nima."

"Good! Then for the baggage. Show me. I am known here and there will be no difficulty in getting it away secretly."

Twenty minutes later, the Tibetan and the baggage had left the inn.

Shervington was left alone with the drunken man. He strode across the room and stared down at the snoring Craydon with eyes that blazed with wrath.

"Fool!" he muttered savagely. "Fool!" A startled light flashed suddenly in his eyes as some thought came to him. He whispered doubtfully. "Or knave! Which?" Then he laughed at his thought. "No! Only fool. But the biggest I ever met."

Reseating himself, Shervington began to review the situation as seen through Nima-Tashi's eyes. The big Tibetan was a shrewd man. Was his friend right in suggesting that Stargard was making the Craydons and himself stalking horses by which he hoped to reach that white monk buried in the lamasery deep in the hills?

Shervington recalled his own suspicion that Stargard might have had something to do with the tragedy off Papua, and with Eliot Craydon's mysterious flight. This time he did not dismiss it.

The only other possible explanation was that which he had hinted to Nima-Tashi, namely, that the man, whose name had shaken the soul of Lo Ong with fear in Shanghai, and who here in Tachienlu had a reputation for secret power was interested in Janet Craydon herself.

But the Tibetan had disposed of that, effectually. If it were true that their journey to Tachienlu had been followed by watchful eyes, then there had been a score of chances that Stargard had not used.

The more Shervington thought of the matter, the more he inclined to the belief that his friend's suggestion was the right one. Neither the Craydons nor himself represented Doctor Stargard's real interest.

That interest centered in that man who, somewhere among the snowy heights, in a monastery where the prayer wheels never ceased to turn, and sonorous chants rolled through all the hours of day and night, sought the way of peace—or mere bodily safety.

The thought became a conviction. As Shervington reflected, he visioned the white-faced slant-eyed Eurasian, with tattooed hand stretched out gropingly in darkness. The man that hand sought to clutch was the white lama of Dze-Chu—the saint of his monastery.

Eleven years ago that tattooed hand had signaled the hellhounds of Rossal to their murderous strangling of a helpless woman, stark with fear, whom they had hunted through their dark woods.

Now the hand was groping for the man who, having received his strangled wife and a letter, had buried her, and fled across the seas, seeking refuge in the bleak, inhospitable hills of the most inaccessible land on earth.

Of a sudden, Shervington had a sense of a terrible, implacable hatred, glowing more lurid with the passage of time, of a dark soul, possessed by an almost demoniac vengefulness. He shuddered a little as the conception shaped in his mind. Then swift apprehension kindled within him.

That dim lust of vengeance had not spared a helpless woman. In its devilish ferocity it had threatened an innocent child. Suppose the man who had kept this vendetta alive through the years, had learned who Janet was, and proposed to include her in its scope?

Shervington knew the East. He understood the deviltries of which the Oriental mind is capable; the cold, passionless ferocity that can design and

look callously on the most inhuman tortures.

The man who had set the strangling cannibals of Rossal to hunt that white woman to her death would not be content merely to inflict death.

If his hatred now included Janet—

Shervington did not complete the thought. A grim look came on his face. Stargard—Hong Chung Lu, the name did not matter—might have power in this topsy-turvy land, but a thousand secret emissaries should not save him if he so much as threatened Janet Craydon.

Finally, Shervington left the inn, to keep watch through the hours of darkness in the street out of which opened the courtyard of the house where the girl slept.

CHAPTER XVII.

GATE OF TIBET.

IT was there, with the bitter dawn wind blowing from the snow-capped heights, that Nima-Tashi surprised him.

For a moment the Tibetan stared in amazement, and then broke into a rumbling laugh. "Ho! Ho! My friend; that flower slip within is not yours. And yet—and yet——"

"And yet I have watched through the night to guard her from ill."

The laughter died out of Nima-Tashi's eyes. His face grew grave. "So! That is what I would expect. But the woman is safe. Come! We will fetch the fool before the stars go out. Then I will bring her to you."

They walked up the street together. Fierce dogs eyed them, bristling. Once Nima-Tashi used a loaded whipstock on a brute more fierce than the rest. In the smoky room at the Bubbling Well, they found Husky Craydon seated on the bare boards where he had spent the night, his head in his hands.

He lifted it as they entered, revealing a sick face and bleary eyes in which, as it seemed to Shervington, there was now something furtive.

Craydon met Shervington's contemptuous stare with a wavering gaze that turned swiftly away. A second later, he stared in sheer amazement as Shervington commanded brusquely:

"Get down, Craydon. We're due to start."

"To start—where?"

"On the first stage to Dze-Chu! It is necessary that we get away before daylight."

"But, man, I'm not fit."

"Get down. There's no time to waste in argument. We've just got to get away at once."

"I'll see you to blazes——"

Craydon did not finish the impolite remark. Nima-Tashi who had no English worth speaking of, must have divined the clash between the two men.

Stepping forward, Nima grasped Craydon by the collar of his tunic, and swung him to the floor. Then, without delay, he began to propel him through the inn to the courtyard, and thence by a secret portal at the back of a stable.

They emerged on what was a mere alley, so narrow, indeed, that they could not walk two abreast. The Tibetan thrust Craydon to the front, and by the simple process of treading brutally on his heels, kept him moving smartly.

Once Craydon looked round and began to shout a protest to Shervington. Nima-Tashi promptly clapped a big unwashed hand over his victim's mouth and cut the protest in two.

Presently they emerged at the western end of the town, on a narrow piece of rising ground, with flanking mountains on either side. Here, after giving Shervington instructions to wait, the Tibetan left them. Craydon dropped onto a rock, his head in his hands.

A prayer wheel, turned by water, creaked near by. A few paling stars showed above the tall hills. Tachienlu, lower down, still slumbered in the shadows. The blistering wind blowing down the valley, brought with it the sound

of a sonorous chant from a lamasery a few hundred yards away.

Suddenly Craydon lifted his head, shivered, as he looked at the river rushing below, then rose to his feet, a black look on his face.

"What's this confounded game?" he demanded blusteringly. "Why did that big brute treat me as he did?"

Nick Shervington was in no mood to suffer blustering from a man whom he despised; and retorted bluntly. "Because you deserved it. It is owing to your folly last night that we are creeping secretly out of Tachienlu and——"

"My folly!" interrupted the other truculently. "What——"

"Oh, what need to ask? Don't be a fool, Craydon! Nima-Tashi picked you up drunk, and as good as carried you to the Bubbling Well. You seem to have found a boon companion in that little eavesdropper whose ears Nima pulled. I gather he knows some English; and no doubt you talked."

"No, I swear."

"Oh, swear away. Nima heard the little chink talking English, and what you said."

"What I said?" The sick face of the speaker went gray. "I—I said nothing."

"No?"

"Nothing to—to hurt!"

"You were quite drunk! How do you know what you said? *In vino veritas*, you know."

"But—but——"

"You even talked in your sleep. You said——"

Shervington broke off as he glanced at the other's face. It had a pallor akin to the pallor of death, and in the eyes there was a light of acute apprehension. As he marked the last, Shervington divined that the man was afraid of what he might have said in his drunken sleep; deadly afraid.

Craydon, in an odd, shaking voice, asked: "What did I say?"

"Nothing much! I think you were referring to your cousin. You said, 'She won't—she won't—but——'"

"Is that all?" asked Craydon, a quick look of relief on his face. "Are you sure that is all?"

"Quite sure!" answered Shervington, contemptuously; and he then added sharply: "What were you afraid you had said?"

"Nothing! I wasn't afraid!" blustered Craydon. "I was merely curious. A fellow doesn't like to make a fool of himself by chattering in his sleep."

"Maybe not!" agreed Shervington, unconvinced, and then fell back on his own thought.

THE sound of gongs came in the wind from the many lamaseries outside the city walls. The stars grew paler, and vanished. The snowy caps of the mountains began to gleam in the sun.

Then, quite suddenly, Nima-Tashi came into view, leading a donkey on which was perched, to all appearances, a Tibetan woman.

"Pull yourself together, Craydon. Here's your cousin. No need to worry her by knowledge of your folly."

As Shervington finished speaking, he hurried forward to meet the advancing pair. When he reached them, Janet Craydon broke into laughter.

"Good morning, Mr. Shervington. How do you like my new costume? The latest fashion from Lhasa."

"It is most becoming," he answered lightly.

"No. I expect I look a fright! But Nima-Tashi left me no option, as his brother's wife took everything from me except my goatskin coat, giving me these things instead."

"They are serviceable and suited to the country, and will not attract attention," replied Shervington. "I expect your cousin and I will presently be arrayed in similar garb."

At the mention of her cousin an odd look came on Janet Craydon's face. As her eyes fell on Husky Craydon, all the laughter died out of them.

When they reached the spot where the man waited, her greeting of him was so constrained that Shervington found himself speculating on the reason for it. Did she know of her cousin's folly? That was scarcely likely, for Nima had not the English to tell her.

Had something happened between the cousins, a difference of opinion or—— Shervington recalled the words the man had spoken in his drunken sleep:

"She won't—she won't—but——"

Again Shervington found himself wondering what it was that Janet Craydon would not do.

They began to move up the road, Nima-Tashi leading; Craydon keeping the intermediate place, with Shervington and the girl bringing up the rear. The full dawn came just as they came in sight of a gloomy-looking lamasery below which a river rushed among the boulders in its bed. The path crossed the river by means of a high-arched bridge of stone.

As they came to it, Shervington pointed dramatically. "The Gate of Tibet, Miss Craydon."

"This bridge?" she cried wonderingly.

"Yes. That is the local name. All the caravans from the Litang-Batang Road come over this bridge; and return the same way."

The girl looked around; marked the gloomy lamasery, the barren, rocky valley through which the river hurried noisily, the darkly somber defile to which the bridge led; and then gave a little shudder.

"My father——" she began in a half whisper, paused, and then finished, "he fled this way?"

"Almost certainly," Shervington replied quietly.

"Oh!" she whispered. "Oh!"

A woman astride a mottled yak came into sight, who, as they passed, stared at the girl keenly, without getting the tribute of a glance in return.

Next a lama, turning a hand prayer wheel and muttering to himself, stalked by. Then, for a time, they had the primitive road to themselves.

As they advanced, the road rose steadily; and the desolation of it increased. Tumbled rocks lay in the path. High cliffs on either side gave the place a gorgelike appearance. Soon the noisy river was left far below.

Still the road ascended. Staring ahead, Shervington saw the snow gleaming on high peaks. He looked back to find that Tachienlu was already out of sight, hidden by an intervening shoulder of a hill; and just as he was facing back, he thought he saw something moving in some rocks away on the left. A sheep, he told himself; and, still respecting the girl's evident desire for silence, looked ahead.

A colossal figure of Buddha, carved out of the living rock, lifted itself to view. Years must have gone to its creation; but the weathering of centuries had seriously damaged the great testimony of a heart's devotion, and a portion of one of the crossed legs had fallen almost onto the path, where it lay among other rocks, detached from the cliff's face.

They passed it; but scarcely were they by when Shervington caught the sound of a falling stone. He stopped and turned round. There was nothing moving to account for it. Deciding that it must be a fragment of the cliff that had fallen, he was on the point of resuming his march, when something whistled by his left ear.

Shervington recognized the screech of a flying bullet, before the sound of the shot reached him. He began to run toward Janet Craydon and the donkey, shouting a warning. Nima-Tashi was already, on all fours on the path.

Shervington's first thought was that the flying bullet had found its billet.

A second later, to his immense relief, he realized that the big Tibetan was crawling toward the cover offered by a short mani wall set in the very middle of the path, another testimony to the devotion of some follower of Buddha.

Craydon at the run had already reached the wall, and was in cover. Without a moment's hesitation, Shervington dragged the girl from the donkey, and holding her hand, made for the prayer wall at the double.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TARGET.

FROM the shelter of the mani wall, Shervington, with Janet Craydon crouching by his side, took a chance. Lifting his head until his eyes were just above the level, he looked forth. Nothing moved in the desolation. Taking a further chance, he lifted his head a little higher. Very carefully he surveyed the hillside, particularly the region of the tumbled rocks in the neighborhood of the great statue.

Shervington saw no sign of the rifleman whose shot had driven them to cover. Save for themselves, the mountain road appeared empty of life. He turned to speak to Nima-Tashi. As he did so he caught a glimpse of Husky Craydon's face which startled him almost as much as the rifle shot had done.

There was on Craydon's face no sign of fear, such as might have been expected from one who had betrayed his lack of spirit. His pale eyes were ablaze, his features wore a look of intense expectation. He was like a man waiting for something he knew was bound to happen at any moment.

As Shervington glimpsed that look, some warning instinct caused him to drop to his knees. In the same second a bullet struck the top of the prayer wall, glanced upward, and went over.

"Keep low, my friend," cried Nima-Tashi, "that was very close."

Shervington disregarded his advice. In a flash, he lifted himself upright and looked down the path from which direction the shot had come. A faint wisp of smoke which even as he saw it was caught and dispersed by the wind, showed him where the would-be assassin was concealed in a clump of rock and bush a little way beyond the shrine.

Having made that discovery, Shervington dropped into shelter again, and looked directly at Husky Craydon. Craydon's face still had the tense expectant look that he had noticed before. Now as Shervington stared at him, the man's face flushed darkly, and his eyes turned hastily away.

An appalling suspicion leaped in Shervington's brain; a thought of a possibility of such incredible infamy that he was ashamed to entertain it. But it was no time for scruples and he proceeded forthwith to put his suspicions to the test.

Shervington turned to the Tibetan: "The man with the rifle is in a handful of rocks and bushes, just beyond the shrine. There is a thing to be proved, which is that it is I at whom he shoots. I wonder if you dare prove the truth, Nima."

The Tibetan grunted. Without an articulated word, he lifted himself to his feet, standing breast-high above the wall. While a man might count twenty seconds on a watch he so stood, fronting the possibility of death.

When he dropped down, there was a grin on his face. "It is not I that brigand wants; but how if it be this arak drinker here? If you can persuade him to get to his feet, we shall know."

He glanced contemptuously at Husky Craydon as he spoke; and Craydon caught the look. An angry expression came on his face; and he demanded truculently: "What was that barbarian saying?"

Shervington answered the question promptly. "He was daring you to stand and look for the marksman. Apparently he has no faith in your courage and——"

"I'll show him!" cried Craydon with a braggart air, and on the words stood upright and stared toward the valley.

Shervington watched him, and marking his confident air, felt his suspicions deepen. He waited until the other turned to him in boastful triumph. "How long am I to offer a target?" he asked.

"For just as long as you like," was the quiet reply. "You do not appear to be in any great peril."

"In as great a peril as that ruffian chum of yours," retorted Craydon, as he sank down behind the wall again. "I consider he owes me an apology for insulting me. You can tell him so."

Shervington translated to Nima-Tashi, who laughed gruffly. "That man behind the rocks is not shooting at the fool! There remains the girl." He glanced toward Janet Craydon as he spoke.

Shervington hastily checked him. "No, Nima. The girl would make the test——"

"Aye, she is of eagle breed."

"But there is no need. Behold!"

He raised himself above the wall, swiftly, and almost as swiftly sank back. In the same second of time, a bullet whined over the wall. Nima-Tashi laughed, and cried something that Shervington did not catch. He was looking at Husky Craydon, whose face was white and tense, while in his eyes was the shadow of a bitter disappointment.

Shervington's suspicions multiplied a hundredfold. It was clear as day that it was his own life the marksman in the rocks was seeking, and that Husky Craydon, like the Tibetan, was immune.

On the heels of the conviction came a question that would not be denied. Was Craydon aware of that immunity?

Was his unanticipated bravado rooted in the knowledge that he was safe? A cold anger stirred in Shervington as his mind shaped the questions and in a flash saw the implication of them.

He stared at Craydon with an intensity that made the other shuffle and laugh uneasily.

"Want me to do the jack-in-the-box turn again, Shervington?" Craydon said, with a sneer.

"No!" answered Shervington freezingly. "I have learned what I wanted to know."

"What was that?" asked Janet Craydon; her eyes fixed on Shervington's face. "Tell me, I should like to——"

SHOUTING voices mingled with a burst of laughter broke on her words. The sounds came from their front. In a second Nima-Tashi had sprung to his feet; and was roaring something in Tibetan. Shervington also raised himself; and saw a string of laden yaks coming up the defile.

Three men ran toward the rocks he indicated; but when they reached them, stood staring about in a manner that told the watchers they had drawn a blank.

The Tibetan left the shelter of the wall and hurried toward the place where the rifleman had found cover; convinced that the man had fled.

Shervington watched the hill behind. At first he saw nothing. Presently he caught sight of a moving object on the boulder-strewn slope behind the cliff carving, and, marking it closely, saw it was a man. He cried the news to the Tibetan who himself stood watching, with the yak drivers at his side.

The man was already too far away for successful pursuit. While Shervington watched the would-be assassin's flight, a hand was laid upon his arm. He turned to find Janet Craydon by his side.

"Mr. Shervington," she said in a

troubled voice, "just now, when you and Husky and Nima-Tashi stood up in turn, you wanted to prove something?"

"Yes!" he answered with a hard laugh. "I wanted to prove which one of us was game for the hunter's bag."

"And you—you were the one that was fired upon," she commented with a little tremor in her voice.

"Yes, apparently that sportsman didn't want Nima or your cousin!"

The girl's dark eyes gleamed with distress as she whispered: "I wonder why he should seek only you?"

"So do I!" replied Shervington.

"That was the queer thing about it ——" began Craydon.

"Yes," harshly interrupted Shervington, a dark look on his face. "Queer enough to make a man believe the incredible."

Craydon checked, said no more but turned hastily away. The girl looked from one to the other with troubled eyes, as if trying to read the thoughts of each.

Then Nima-Tashi came roaring along. "Forward, my friend. That bandit will trouble us no more; and we travel ahead of the caravan. Where is the woman's donkey?"

Janet Craydon mounted her small steed afresh. In their original order they faced the mountain road once more. Nima-Tashi swung along at a good pace and the others followed as best they could, till toward noon, when the Tibetan called a halt. They made a meal of *tsamba*, the odd mixture of parched meal, yak butter, and tea, which is the staple food of the Forbidden Land.

EXCEPT for Nima-Tashi, who was jovial enough, constraint held them tongue-tied. Craydon sat a little apart, a gloomy look on his face. Shervington was absorbed in his thoughts which were plainly not good. The girl looked from one to the other, clearly disturbed by

the apparent lack of fellowship between them.

When they resumed the way to Cheto, the girl called her cousin to her.

"Husky, walk with me. I want to talk with you."

Rather sullenly Craydon obeyed her. As Shervington swung ahead with his friend, she asked sharply: "Husky, what is the matter with you?"

The man flashed an almost angry glance at her. "Matter?" he said, with heat. "I should have thought you would know without asking."

Janet Craydon flushed at his tone, and little flames leaped in the dark eyes; but with a visible effort she restrained herself. "Husky," she asked, quietly, but in a voice that was tense, "do you think it will help you to behave like a sullen boy?"

"A sullen boy——" he flashed, and then stopped as he caught the look on her face.

"Yes, a sullen boy," repeated the girl. "You must see that you are not behaving nicely. Because I would not promise to marry you, to-day you are behaving—oh, pitifully!"

Craydon had the grace to flush, then he explained stammeringly: "It is not because you did not promise. It is because you give me no hope, that I am thrown out of my stride."

Janet Craydon glanced sidewise at him; and for a little time was thoughtfully silent. Then, knowing that such an atmosphere as prevailed at present would make impossible the search on which her heart was set, she used a feminine wile, replying tactfully:

"You broke the treaty of silence, Husky. You know it was understood that you were to have my answer when we had definitely learned the truth about my father."

"Yes!" answered the man without any sign of being mollified. "But when is that going to be?"

"It is not going to be very long,

if we have good fortune. We know where he is. With Nima-Tashi to guide us, we shall not be more than a month in reaching him."

"And then——" began Craydon, breaking off without finishing, his eyes fixed on the tall figure of Nick Shervington swinging ahead with the Tibetan. The girl caught the direction of his gaze. When he turned to her again her face was flushed.

"What then?" he asked.

"The answer," she said lightly, "is part of the treaty. You must not press me again. Sufficient unto the day, you know, and you really must not ask me to anticipate the future, nor must you act like—like——" She broke off and then whispered urgently, "Oh, Husky, be yourself!"

Craydon lifted himself a little. There was an apologetic tone in his voice as he replied: "I can't help it, Janet. I am upset because——"

His gaze went ahead once more; and the girl divined what went unsaid. "Because of Mr. Shervington? Why? He is taking risks for us. Those bullets that were fired were meant for him, because he is helping us and——"

"I wish they had got him!" cried the man violently, in a jealous rage.

The girl was shocked at his violence which revealed the blackness of his thought. For a little time she did not speak, but her mind was very busy.

She thought of Shervington's conviction that he was the person at whom the unknown marksman had fired; a conviction that stood proved. She recalled the dark look on his face and his harsh interruption of her cousin: "Queer enough to make a man believe the incredible!"

What had he meant? What was that incredible thing that was forced upon him? Scarcely had she asked herself the question when a quite terrible intuition of the significance of the words flashed within her.

Husky, aflame with jealousy, had wished that Shervington had been killed by one of those bullets which had been plainly seeking him. Had he— She did not finish the thought. It was too black—no! Too ridiculous to entertain! There could be no treachery possible on the part of her cousin, who was a stranger in this strange land.

As that conviction surged, it brought with it a flood of relief from the horror that had gripped her; disposing her to kindness to the man whose passion had betrayed him into what she conceived was no more than a jealous indiscretion.

"Husky," she said, "you must not say such things. You must not think things that are not true. Mr. Shervington is my very good friend—our very good friend."

"Not mine!" he interrupted, a little less violently.

"Then mine," she replied grimly, "my friend but nothing more." Then, striving to break down her cousin's black mood, she gave a laugh. "And it's a case of love me, love my dog, for you, Husky."

Her voice became serious once more. "We are very dependent upon Mr. Shervington and his Tibetan friend. They represent our one hope of finding my father. If you ruin that hope with jealous tantrums that are wholly uncalled for, I shall never forgive you, never."

At that he looked up and met her eyes. "What do you want me to do, Janet?"

"Behave like a man! You were one just now when you stood up behind that queer wall to be shot at. I was quite thrilled as you stood there."

Husky Craydon thrilled at her words of praise. "You'll have your way of course, Janet. I—I'll—do my best to love your dog, so long as he keeps his teeth out of me!"

"Thanks, Husky," she said quietly. "I knew you would do what I wished, and I can make allowances, you know."

"Janet," he cried impulsively, "you're too good for me! You make me ashamed."

CHAPTER XIX.

MANHOOD—NOT GOLD.

A CARAVAN, the burden bearers of which were yaks and asses, forced them to the side of the narrow road while it passed. As Nima-Tashi exchanged greetings with the men, Craydon took the opportunity to be affable.

"I say, Shervington, old man, what do those beasts carry down to Tachienlu?"

"Gold dust and skins, mostly," answered Shervington, a little tartly.

"Gold dust! Gee! I didn't know there was gold dust up here! Where do you reckon they've come from?"

"I don't know," replied Shervington. "But by the look of the beasts and men they have come a long way."

"But are they never robbed?" asked Miss Craydon, as the tail of the caravan passed and Nima-Tashi stepped into the road again.

"Often," replied Shervington with a laugh. "There are as many brigands in Tibet as there are in the rest of Asia, and they mostly go scot-free."

Shervington fell into step by the girl's side as he talked, and Craydon walked just behind; his cousin dragging him into the conversation as it seemed by sheer force of will. And so in a condition which, if it was not one of fellowship, was certainly one from which open hostility had vanished, they came to Che-to, a scattered hamlet among the hills.

It was near sunset, and the place by reason of the tall hills was already in the shadow of night. A herd of yak grazed in a field near by. A few goats browsed by the side of the rough track. Just as they reached the village a small flock of white pigeons flew across the track.

Two women, long unwashed, gossip-

ing at a doorway, stared listlessly at them as they went by. Heavy-faced children in the rough street betrayed a little livelier interest, but their arrival caused no sort of stir.

As she looked round, Janet Craydon exclaimed: "What a desolate place!"

"You will see many more desolate across the hills there!" answered Shervington.

The girl stared in the direction indicated. "Is that the way we take?"

"That track there winding between the heights is the caravan road to Lhasa. Our way will branch from it very early, as we take a pass to the north."

Janet Craydon marked the snow on the taller hills, and then asked quickly: "Do we go beyond the snow line?"

"I don't know; but I think it is likely." Shervington looked at her thoughtfully, and added: "It will be difficult work; possibly hazardous. If you are wise you will not go——"

"I am resolved!" she said abruptly. As the words broke from her they came to the home of Nima-Tashi, a two-storied house of some pretensions.

Long after his other guests had retired to rest, Nima-Tashi sat with Shervington, smoking, talking of the projected journey, and explaining the preparations he must make. The American sat with a preoccupied air, and scarcely noticed when the Tibetan ceased to speak and stared at him, curiously.

The silence lasted a little time, but when Nima broke it, his words caught his guest's attention swiftly enough.

"Concerning the man with the rifle, who is in your mind, my friend. It is a strange thing that he sought but one of us."

"How do you know that he was in my mind, Nima?"

The Tibetan laughed. "By the look in the eyes. They are not bright as when one dreams of a woman. There is in them a darkness as if in the brain

behind there was the thought of a man with a kris who will strike secretly in the night."

"A kris is not a rifle," countered Shervington carelessly.

"True! It is not so good a weapon for secret murder. With a bullet one can kill afar off, and unseen!" The Tibetan paused, and then asked abruptly: "Why should the man among the rocks have not sought me or the weakling who is not your friend?"

"How should I know? And how can you know that the man who is with me is not my friend?"

Nima-Tashi laughed softly and with scorn. "I saw his face when you stood up behind the mani wall. It was the face of a man who was waiting for the kill. The man knew that death would fly to meet you. He hoped, aye, he hoped, that the bullet would smell you out, as he knew it would not come to him."

"Nima-Tashi——" began Shervington protestingly; but the other disregarded him.

"It is because of the girl he would have you killed. Lacking the spirit to do the killing himself, he hires another with a rifle to——"

"Nima, you're an old driver! How could he do that, knowing nothing of the speech of the land?"

The Tibetan laughed. "But he talked with one who knew his own speech—the little rat with whom he drank arak and who ran from me last night."

Nick Shervington had no need to have that fact recalled to his mind. It had been there all the time since the attack by the great shrine.

But it disturbed him greatly that Nima-Tashi should share his suspicions. There was a troubled look on his face as he sat there, not attempting any reply to the dark thing implied in his friend's words.

"There are rifles in the baggage the yaks brought from Tachienlu. To-mor-

row, if you walk abroad, you will carry one, my friend. There are white pheasants up the valley that will serve for excuse; but it will be for bigger game than pheasants you will watch—hey?”

Shervington nodded, recognizing that the other's caution was a wise one. Then Nima spoke again:

“That man in there,” he nodded, indicating the room where Craydon slept, “who knows? Jealous thoughts may nerve him with a passing courage. Thus it is with his breed, and it is as well to be watchful. I should not like to find you dead, my friend, when I return in three days with the stores from Tachienlu.”

“Nor should I,” said Shervington, a little grimly, “and I shall save us both from that grief.”

“Good.” Nima knocked the ashes from his pipe and rose. “Now that the warning is spoken, I sleep. In the morning I depart before the sun. But the house and all in it is yours till my return.”

“Thank you, Nima.”

Shervington followed his friend to the wooden sleeping shelf, and wrapped in a soft goatskin robe, lay awake half the night, the prey of disturbing thoughts. In the morning he was up betimes to watch his host depart.

Standing at the entrance to the courtyard, Shervington stared after the string of yaks as they moved down the caravan road in the mists of dawn. The last was yet in sight, when Nima-Tashi turned and waved his whip.

Shervington waved back, and was still watching when he heard a light step behind him. Turning swiftly, he found himself face to face with Janet Craydon. She wore the rather clumsy, unbecoming costume which Nima's sister-in-law had provided; but the beauty of her face was like a star, and her dark eyes were gay.

“Good morning, Mr. Shervington,” she laughed. “Am I intruding?”

“Of course not,” he laughed back.

“I was awake, and as I heard your voice and Nima-Tashi's in the courtyard, I arose. Where is your friend?”

Shervington pointed to the yaks disappearing in the mists. “On his way to Tachienlu for our stores. In three days he will be back.”

“Three days! Then for that time we shall be alone here?”

“Yes.”

A thoughtful look came in the girl's dark eyes. For a second or two she was silent. Then impulsively she stretched a hand and rested it lightly on his arm. “Mr. Shervington,” she said in a quick, tremulous voice, “I have a favor to ask. You do not like my cousin. I do not know why; but for my sake I hope you will be friends. I do not know what has come over Husky, but in the last few days——”

Some one coughed harshly from the neighborhood of the house as if the smoke of the fire had caught in his throat. Shervington, looking over the girl's head, saw the man of whom she was speaking standing in the doorway, watching them with savage eyes. But before Shervington could hail him, he turned on his heel and disappeared in the house.

The look on her companion's face told Janet Craydon that something had happened, and she began quickly: “There is something—what——”

“Your cousin was in the doorway, watching us. He did not seem pleased. I think he—misunderstood the position——”

Shervington broke off and glanced down at the little hand still on his arm. As he did so, the girl's face flushed vividly.

She said quickly: “That was thoughtless of me.” She released his arm as she spoke. “Excuse me. I must go make my peace with Husky.”

She was off before he could speak, and as he saw her enter the house, a

jealous fire kindled in his own heart. Her peace with Husky? How? A wave of anger shook him at the thought that she should so consider one who was a cur. With the anger mingled devotion for the girl, kindled as much by her fineness of spirit as by her radiant beauty. Then he laughed harshly at himself, recalling the relation in which they stood. He was a beggar whom she had picked from the streets and she——

He did not finish the thought. His eyes turned toward a line of snowy peaks already kindling to the unseen sun. Up there, beyond the passes, in the depths of the wild hills, it was manhood and not gold that would count, and that might even turn the scales for a beggar.

CHAPTER XX.

A LONG CHANCE.

AT the hour of dawn, a week later, Nick Shervington stood in the courtyard of Nima-Tashi's house, surveying the little caravan that was to go in search of the cliff lamasery in the mountains by the Dze-Chu River. Seven loaded yaks stood waiting. One of the Tibetan yak drivers held the reins of a native mule intended for Janet Craydon's use.

Nima-Tashi was going from yak to yak, inspecting the fastenings, examining the bundles to see that nothing had been omitted.

Husky Craydon, a little apart, watched the Tibetan with lackluster eyes, throwing now and again a furtive glance at Shervington, who did not once look in his direction.

Presently Nima-Tashi satisfied, left his beasts and, going to the door, gave a shout that was very like a bellow.

A moment later, Janet Craydon appeared, dressed as a Tibetan woman. Her pale face was flushed; her dark eyes dancing with excitement; and, notwithstanding the clumsy native boots she wore, she tripped to the waiting mule.

Both Shervington and her cousin moved forward to assist her; but Nima-Tashi, giving one of his big rolling laughs, caught her under the arms and swung her into the saddle as if she had been a baby.

The girl laughed her thanks, Nima grinned back, threw a final glance over the waiting yaks, and then gave the word. A moment later the first yak moved out of the courtyard. The second began to follow; and as the third moved, Janet Craydon whispered tensely to Shervington:

"At last! At last we go!"

He nodded smilingly, understanding her excitement; but the smile quickly passed as they moved into the open. On all the high hills heavy clouds hung low. A bitter wind blowing down the caravan road nipped the cheeks and set a chill in the blood. The somber beginning of day seemed an omen that was not good.

Shervington could not shake the feeling off. It persisted with him. Nima-Tashi, ahead with the leading yak, was nung of day seemed an ill omen.

Janet Craydon was in high spirits as her laughter, clear as chiming bells, disclosed. Her cousin evidently found her spirits infectious, for soon his laughter, mingling with hers, reached Shervington at the end of the little cavalcade.

All this but added to Shervington's own feeling of gloom. The hills, he thought, had a stark look. The land was inimical; and ahead of them its forces waited to mock their purpose.

He knew the perils of such a journey, and ordinarily would have faced them light-heartedly enough. But Janet Craydon was a responsibility; and her cousin, if emergency arose, was likely to prove a reed.

PRESENTLY with the wind came a mist of rain, which soon changed to a driving hail; but the little caravan did not halt, did not even pause. Its

human members bent their heads to the icy fusillade; and the burdened yaks trudged on through what, for them, was an everyday thing.

Presently the clouds broke, and the sun shone clearly; but there was no cessation of the wind which came cuttingly down the road, penetrating to the very bone.

With but the briefest of halts at mid-day, they pressed on until they reached a point where stood a number of poles from which prayer flags fluttered in the breeze. Near by were two oboes, large mounds of stone.

As they reached the place, Nima-Tashi halted the caravan and shouted something in Tibetan to Shervington.

The American answered, and then approached Janet Craydon. "We turn off here! There is the road to Dze-Chu."

As he spoke, he pointed to what looked like a goat track winding up a narrow valley between frowning hills. The girl looked thoughtfully at the spidery track and at the high masses of rock between which it climbed.

"I am glad we have reached the wicket gate so soon," she said. "What is Nima looking for?"

"A white stone, I imagine," he answered. "Nima is a skeptic; but he conforms to the ritual of the land, as I think we must. May I help you down?"

"I do not understand," she replied wonderingly.

"Here is where you must bow in the House of Rimmon and offer a sacrifice to the strange gods of Asia," Shervington explained. "You must find and add a white stone to one of these cairns before we take the road to Dze-Chu. We must all do it. It is the custom of the land. I question whether Nima's yak driver would go on if we refused."

Janet laughed and spoke to her cousin. "We will conform to the law, Husky. Come and help me to find my stone."

Shervington found a stone for himself and carried it toward one of the cairns. Nima-Tashi, having made his contribution to the pile, stood with a half grin of approval on his face.

"A long chance, my friend," he said to Shervington, "but one never knows, and if we can cure the wrath of the gods with a pebble, it were foolish to refuse it."

"True," you old heathen!" Shervington answered, and then stood to watch Janet Craydon make her own prayer for good fortune.

FIVE minutes later they took the wavering track to Dze-Chu. Once more Shervington was at the rear. Just before he turned to follow the others, he took a last glimpse up and down the main caravan route. As he did so, round a spur of rock a quarter of a mile down the road came a solitary man, astride a pony.

Shervington stared at the traveler in wonder. A suspicion that the stranger was trailing Nima-Tashi's little caravan shot into his mind. The next moment he dismissed it. If the man upon the pony was shadowing them, he was doing it openly. As Shervington reflected, standing where he was near the oboes at a conspicuous point, the traveler could not fail to see him, and yet he came on unconcernedly.

With the suspicion already fading, Shervington stared at the oncoming man for a second or two longer, and then as the man and pony passed a light-colored boulder by the track he caught a splash of red, and laughed with relief.

"A red lama!" he muttered; and the next second was following his companions up the goat track to Dze-Chu.

A little way up the valley, Shervington looked back, to see that the lama had halted the pony by the oboes and was in the act of fulfilling the ritual which the custom of the land ordained.

While he watched, he saw the man remount and turn his pony up the Letang Road.

After that Shervington moved on unconcernedly, till he had almost overtaken his companions. At a point where the track turned so sharply that henceforth the caravan road must be hidden from view, he looked back for the last time.

To his extreme amazement, Shervington saw the mounted lama passing the oboes again, with his pony's head in the direction of Che-to. At the sight, suspicion quickened in his mind anew. Why had the man turned in his tracks?

No satisfactory answer was forthcoming to this question. The man could not have made any mistake in the road; since from Che-to to this point there was no track past which he might have ridden in inadvertence.

Further, the most devoted of red lamas would not have made the toilsome journey from Che-to merely to deposit a stone on an oboe set at the entrance to a track that he did not propose to follow.

Shervington found himself facing the possibility of the man being a spy on the movements of his companions and himself. That was far from improbable. That Stargard, who had shown such an active interest in them in Shanghai, and who, no doubt, had received a telegram from Ichang, had relinquished his pursuit, did not seem very likely.

Shervington recalled Lo Ong's account of the man as he was known to his Chinese compatriots, and Nima-Tashi's description of Hong Chung Lu as a name of hidden power from Tachienlu to Shanghai. As he did so, his suspicions deepened.

There was that little chink who had excused himself for his eavesdropping at the Bubbling Well on the ground of his wish to see the most virtuous lady, and had afterward, on Nima-Tashi's evidence, talked with the intoxicated Craydon in English!

What if he were one of Stargard's agents? Then there was the man who had fired those shots on the Che-to road! Was he also Stargard's man; or was he a tool of Craydon's, or again—great heavens!—of both?

CHAPTER XXI.

MENACING SHADOW.

AGAIN Shervington remembered his thought that Stargard might be the connecting link between that eleven-year-old tragedy at Rossal Island and the man hidden deep in the frowning hill country toward which they moved.

With the remembrance came a swift sense of the implacability and pertinacity of the man whom they had sought to evade. That red lama who had turned back down the Che-to road, if lama he were, was just one more of the shadows who had followed their course across the width of China, and now over the borders of the Forbidden Land.

But, convinced though he was of this, Shervington did not mention it to either Janet Craydon or her cousin.

But when they camped for the night, and Janet Craydon was sleeping in the little tent they had brought along, and her cousin snoring in his sleeping bag, Shervington whispered his suspicions to Nima-Tashi. The Tibetan heard him unmoved. At the end, as he looked down the spider track to the darkness of the valley below, he gave a chuckling laugh, and significantly tapped the rifle by his side.

"There is no law in these hills," he commented, "and a rifle bullet will travel far. Since I gave up playing lama I have shot four men—brigands, all of them. This man is worse than a brigand."

Then he looked Shervington in the eyes. "You and I, my friend, have shot goats in the hills before."

"Yes!" answered Shervington, understanding what was in the other's mind.

"Aye, and we shall shoot this goat if need be; but that, I think, will not be for a little while, if what you think is true, my friend."

"Why not?"

"Because methinks this Stargard whom I have heard of as Hong Chung Lu would have us lead him to the white lama at Dze-Chu. Remember, he may not have heard the name; though it is likely that he knows whom we seek."

"That snoring fool there was far gone in arak when he talked with the little rat at Tachienlu. He may not have told our destination, whatever else he babbled of. Chang and arak loosen the tongue, but also they give a twist to it and thicken the speech. It is possible that the fool's tongue could not compass the name."

"Possible, yes! But if that riding lama were a spy——"

"Then, my friend, if we are pursued we fall back on the law of the flying bullet. In these hills one need not suffer brigands unless they are stronger than oneself, and there is one thing that is in our favor."

"I should like to hear it."

Nima waved a hand toward the dark valley. "Those men back there will be careless in pursuit. They will think we do not know that they follow at our heels; and we—we shall be watchful. So, unless they come in strength, the game is ours. Also, it is to be borne in mind that it is easy to lose a man, or even a caravan, in these hills. Now, because I am unafraid, and am sure that these men will come not to-night, I sleep."

Without more ado, Nima rolled himself in a yak-skin robe, and soon his snoring told Shervington that he slept. For a long time, however, the American sat staring into the dying fire.

Presently there came a sound, the long-drawn howl of a wolf, which was responded to by others of his kin. Somewhere up the pass the scourge of

the mountains and the high plateaus followed the hunger trail.

As Shervington stared into the fire, a face shaped itself there, a face with high cheek bones, flattened nose, a mouth like a rat trap, hair black as night; and eyes of piercing quality, which looked back at him menacingly. The face of Stargard who, after eleven long years, still followed the trail of a man who had fled from him in panic terror.

IN the early morning, when the stars were paling, Shervington made his breakfast with Nima. Before the Craydons were moving, he set out to climb to a point that would afford him a view of the backward way. It was a full half hour before he reached the desired vantage place, and by that time the light of morning was beginning to penetrate the valley. Shervington examined all the neighborhood carefully without finding any moving thing or any column of smoke that would indicate an encampment. A little reassured, he took his way back to the camp, to find the yaks loaded and ready to start. The Tibetan moved forward to meet him, and to him Shervington spoke a single word:

"Nothing!"

Nima-Tashi laughed cheerfully and answered lightly: "Nothing or something, my friend, what matter? We carry the law with us for both."

Five minutes later in the order in which they had marched the previous day, they resumed their journey, Nima leading and Shervington bringing up the rear. The icy wind blew in their faces, but the sky was clear and the climbing sun lighted the peaks ahead with cold light.

The pass narrowed and for a time the track lay along a dizzy edge. They passed it safely and then, as the path swung steeply upward, they came to the first snow.

It was no more than a powdering among the moss which grew there abun-

dantly, but, after a little time, the powdering became a covering, hiding the moss completely, and the wind, lifting it, flung the loose snow in their faces. Progress became sheer labor.

The yaks grunted as they were prodded forward up a slope like the roof of a house, a slope which on the right sagged steeply toward the dark valley. The first one reached the summit of the ridge and passed.

Nima-Tashi's voice roared something triumphantly. The second yak passed from sight, three others followed safely, and then came the turn of the mule.

Halfway up the slope, the mule jibbed and refused to proceed. The girl tried to coax him, and then dug her heels in his flanks, at the same time using a stick she carried. This made the beast only the more recalcitrant. Instead of going forward, he swung sidewise and began to back, with his haunches toward the dangerous slope down to the valley deep.

Shervington saw the danger and called an agonized warning.

"Drop off, quickly, Miss Craydon!"

The girl flung a glance backward over her shoulder. She realized her peril and flung herself into the snow. The mule's hind legs were already slipping. He seemed unable to help himself, though, too late, he tried to struggle back to less dangerous ground. But the more he plunged the more hopelessly did he slide toward the fatal edge where the cliff fell sheer to drop a good six hundred feet.

Suddenly to his horror, Shervington realized that Janet Craydon also was moving down the snow-covered slope. A stretched-out hand lifted for a moment showed him that it was entangled in the reins. He saw that the struggling beast was dragging her down with him.

He shouted wildly to Husky Craydon, who was nearest, but who stood there staring like a man hypnotized.

Shervington flung himself forward, reached the dangerous slope, and began to crawl down it. He caught the girl's feet, and tried to dig his own in the snow to check the movement toward the edge, which the plunging mule had reached.

Clinging with one hand, Shervington found a knife with the other. As he stretched forward to reach her free hand, he shouted desperately:

"Cut the rein! Cut the rein!"

His fear was that she would not understand, that in face of the yawning peril she might faint, and, for a second which seemed an eternity, he waited in agony.

The mule plunged more wildly, its hind feet slipped into space, and it squealed with fear. Shervington felt the girl slither forward a little.

The mule squealed again in the very act of toppling backward. Shervington saw the reins grow taut, then something flashed in the sun, and there was a twang like a breaking bowstring as the reins severed.

Then the mule's forefeet slipped. With another pitiful squeal, the unhappy beast dropped downward to destruction.

Janet Craydon, anchored on the very edge of the drop, was left looking down into the valley, where far below the wild stream foamed and babbled. Shervington was in an agony lest the snow should begin to move and precipitate her to death.

He spoke quietly, reassuringly: "Keep perfectly still, Miss Craydon. Don't look down! Shut your eyes."

The girl made no reply; but she obeyed. Half a minute later Shervington heard Nima-Tashi's voice shouting directions.

Something swished through the air and fell almost to Shervington's hand. He groped in the snow and found an end of rope which he swiftly knotted about the girl's feet above the ankles. Another rope fell as he finished and

that he twisted round his own right arm.

Then he called out and rolled gently over in the snow to clear the way for the girl. He heard rather than saw her dragged past him up the slope. Two minutes later, he felt a strain on his arm. Grasping the rope with both hands, he was drawn up at a rate which told him that Nima was using the yaks above the crest for the work.

In a twinkling Shervington was scrambling to his feet at the point where the mule had jibbed. As he stood upright he saw Janet Craydon. Her face was extraordinarily pale, her dark eyes glowing like coals. She strove to speak, to thank him.

Then, as she collapsed, he caught her in his arms.

CHAPTER XXII.

SPELL OF THE EAST.

IN a little while Janet Craydon lifted her head, flushed painfully as she realized that she was leaning on Shervington's shoulder; then drew herself up and away.

Husky Craydon now hurried forward, his mouth full of excuses. "That was a narrow squeak, Janet. The thing happened so suddenly that one hadn't time to realize it; until it was over. If I'd guessed——"

He checked himself as he caught the look in the girl's eyes. There was complete understanding there. He had been the nearest; Shervington had shouted to him, and he had failed her.

Shervington intervened. "Miss Craydon, let me help you to the crest."

His matter-of-fact tone checked her natural emotion and saved an awkward situation. She turned to him gratefully and soon they were standing at the edge of a small plateau, over which the loose snow eddied and whirled like fine sand, and beyond which rose another line of hills. For a second or two they stood surveying the desolation.

Then the girl spoke:

"Mr. Shervington, how can I thank you?"

"Don't try, please!" he returned. "I have seen much more desperate risks taken to save a pack animal——"

"Oh!" she broke in, and then laughed tremulously.

Shervington joined in the laughter. "Not very complimentary, I am afraid; but it is the truth. On a journey in these hills perilous chances are frequent and have to be taken for quite small things, you know."

Husky Craydon came up at that moment and began to talk volubly.

Shervington moved away but smiled to himself as he noted the girl's undisguised aloofness. He could imagine the excuses that Craydon was making; his protestations, his braggart claims of what he would have done had he but realized her peril.

Shervington was glad that apparently they had no weight with the girl. The sooner she discovered what a thing of lath and plaster was the man who desired to marry her, the better. He turned and stood watching Nima-Tashi marshaling the little caravan again. The Tibetan came forward as he completed the task.

"The woman," he began, "may ride one of the yaks or walk."

"A little of both may be best," answered Shervington.

"Aye! It is a pity, though, that the mule was lost."

"A great pity, but better the mule than Miss Craydon."

"True! But the mule did his work, for it revealed that the arak drinker is no man. While you, my friend——"

"Dry up, Nima!" interrupted Shervington.

"Aye, since you will! But I can read a woman's eyes with another man, and—well, that fool mule was not wasted."

"Maybe you will ask the woman about the yak?" Nima-Tashi continued. "It is time we were moving again."

SHERVINGTON nodded and approached the cousins. As he did so, Husky Craydon fell silent. Looking at the two faces, the man's flushed and vexed, the girl's pale and austere, Shervington knew that Craydon's protestations had availed him nothing.

"Miss Craydon," he began, "Nima will put one of the yaks at your disposal; but I have suggested that possibly you would like to walk a little."

"Of course! I don't want to ride all the time, and in this blustering wind it will be warmer to walk."

The caravan moved forward once more, Janet Craydon falling into step by Shervington's side.

She was silent for a little time, and then asked shyly: "I hope I did not behave too badly just now?"

"On the slope, you mean? Miss Craydon, you were just splendid!"

"Oh, I don't know——"

"You never even cried out!"

"Don't credit me with too much courage," she protested with a tremulous laugh. "I was almost paralyzed with fear. I saw myself moving toward that edge, and it was as if I were hypnotized by it——"

"But you broke the spell in time!" he interrupted sharply. "That is the thing that matters. I have felt like that myself in moments of grave danger. It is a quite common experience, until the will asserts itself——"

"It was your voice that woke mine; that, and the knife you thrust into my hand. By-the-by, I am afraid I dropped that in the snow."

"What matter?" He laughed lightly. "It served the purpose for which it was made, and, with its work done, drops out."

"You really believe that?" she asked curiously. "You believe that things are fated to happen?"

"Well," he temporized smilingly, "that is a stout doctrine to swallow whole. But it is the doctrine of all the

East, you know, and one tends to imbibe a little of all kinds of stray beliefs when he moves among them.

"Nima-Tashi, for instance, once lived in a lamasery. To-day he professes to believe nothing; but he would as soon go without eating as pass an oboe without the prescribed ritual, and always he goes by a mani wall on the orthodox side."

Shervington added jestingly: "It would not surprise me if somewhere under his yak-skin coat he had a hidden prayer mill, which he turns surreptitiously."

Janet Craydon looked toward the big Tibetan and joined in her companion's laughter. "What matter? He can be as superstitious as he likes. He is a really splendid fellow."

"One of the very best," agreed Shervington, heartily.

The girl said nothing for a moment, then, with her eyes on her cousin, she asked abruptly: "Do you think Husky realized what was happening back there?"

For a moment Nick Shervington was tempted to tell her the exact truth about the man; to explain that he was a coward in grain from whom nothing was to be expected in the way of heroic action. But he suppressed the impulse, and answered with reserve. "The accident was very sudden. He may not have understood——"

"Do you really believe that?" she interjected quickly. "I heard you shout to him, you know."

He did not reply to her question, knowing that there was no need.

The girl added in a troubled voice: "Until just now I thought that Husky was a brave man; that he was one upon whom I could depend in any emergency, but now——" She broke off without completing the thought in her mind.

Shervington became aware that the yaks ahead had halted; and in the same

second saw Husky Craydon looking his way with an almost venomous expression on his face.

A second later, Nima-Tashi called to Shervington, pointing across a valley that marked the edge of the plateau.

"There lies our way, my friend."

CHAPTER XXIII.

RESENTMENT.

HUSKY CRAYDON forgotten, Shervington looked in the direction indicated by the Tibetan. Against the sky line on the other side of the valley, he caught a flutter of prayer flags, and near them a large oboe was partly hidden in the snow. He guessed that the oboe on the opposite ridge marked the summit of the pass.

"Good!" Shervington said. "Let us make the downward pace, Nima!"

"Aye! And break our necks on the sides of this pit of hell!" the Tibetan cried, staring into the valley. "The track goes round. It will be the day after to-morrow when we get up there."

Shervington did not question the statement. To those fluttering prayer flags, less than an hour's journey as the crow flies, the gorgelike valley barred the way. The approach, wherever it lay, must be more gradual, and must be searched for.

Excusing himself, Shervington left Janet Craydon with the yak driver and her cousin, and waded through the snow with Nima to look for the hidden track.

They walked a good half mile along the edge of the plateau, and might have walked all day but for a sound that reached Shervington's ears.

"Hark!" he said.

The Tibetan halted, listened keenly for a moment, then, as a whirring noise impinged on his hearing, he grinned.

"A prayer mill to show us the way."

Guided by the sound, they reached a place where a small prayer mill was set between two huge rocks. The wind

drove the machine, now faster, now slower, but without stopping.

Beyond the rocks was a depression in the snow which, winding in and out among boulders in the serpentine fashion of all primitive paths, was almost certainly the track they sought.

"The way!" cried Nima, pointing.

"We will fetch the yaks."

When he and Nima reached the waiting yaks it was clear to Shervington's observant eyes that some serious disagreement had arisen between Janet Craydon and her cousin.

The girl's face had a high color, and there was a flashing indignation in her eyes that it was impossible to mistake. Craydon had a black, sullen look which told how deeply he resented whatever had occurred.

BETWEEN the great rocks with its whining prayer mill, a toylike testimony to the devoutness of some seeker of Buddha's mystic way, the party took a long, winding way that gradually worked toward the valley. They passed from the snow line into a region of huge granite boulders between which the spider track ran a zigzag course.

Toward evening, they came to the head of what was a natural bridge across the valley, made by some titanic fall of cliff from the opposite side.

Across this the way went; but, with dusk falling in the valley, they made camp for the night in a place where the yaks could feed on the dry tufts of grass.

It was a gloomy place. The hills, dark and forbidding in the dusk, towered over them, shutting out what remained of the light. A cold wind moaned and sobbed up the twisted valley. Once, there sounded the howling of wolves.

Nima-Tashi was unusually silent, and the Craydons were plainly not on speaking terms. Immediately after supper the girl retired to her tent.

Craydon sat glowering in the fire. Shervington, seated on the other side of the fire, smoked and reflected on the events of the day. Nima-Tashi sat with eyes closed, his hands on his lap in the precise position of a man who tells his beads.

Some time passed, and only once did any of the men move, Husky Craydon turning sharply to stare into the darkness behind him, as if sensing some unseen presence.

Shervington saw his face as the man fronted the fire again; and what he beheld there told him that Craydon was feeling the impact of things that invariably make themselves felt in the darkness of the wilderness, awakening fearful imaginings—old racial terrors of the darkness and solitude that are a heritage from the time when the earth was young.

Shervington smiled a little to himself at the reflection. There had been a time when he himself had felt the same things vividly; there were times still when he could not wholly repress the apprehensive feelings of vague, inimical things waiting in the darkness.

C-r-r-a-n-g!

The sound broke on Shervington's thoughts with a suddenness so startling that it jerked him to his feet. Nima-Tashi leaped up with a swiftness incredible in so big a man.

"A rifle shot!" Shervington's voice range out clear but low.

At the words, Husky Craydon jumped to his feet, for the first time realizing the significance of the sound. Instinctively the three men slunk back beyond the circle of firelight.

"That shot," whispered the Tibetan, "was fired from close by, my friend."

"Right!" replied Shervington. "And it was a modern rifle, not the matchlock of a brigand."

"True!" was the low response.

The men stood tense, waiting, accusing their eyes to the gloomy darkness. The hills that towered above

them were visible only in ominous outline. A cold wind moaned weirdly on its path through the snow-capped peaks. The howl of a lone wolf sounded like the death cry of some evil spirit.

The fourth installment of this forbidden-land serial will appear in the succeeding issue of **TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE**, on the news stands April 1st.

Don't Dig Here

A MAN had invited a business acquaintance to play a round of golf with him. The guest, a very pompous individual, was also a poor player, and hacked up the turf with each stroke.

After he had carried away an unusually generous portion with his iron, he turned to his host and said:

"You know, I don't care particularly for the game, but I like the glorious open country hereabouts."

"Ah, quite," replied the other, as he surveyed the scarred ground, "but do you mind closing up the open country as we go along?"

Go Ahead

THIS is the story of the world's laziest man, who was so idle that he would not work, and who finally found the effort of eating too much for him.

His friends thought to do him a good turn by frightening him. They put him in a wheelbarrow and began to push him toward a newly dug grave in the cemetery.

On the way a farmer stopped them and was informed that the man was too idle to eat and had had nothing for a week.

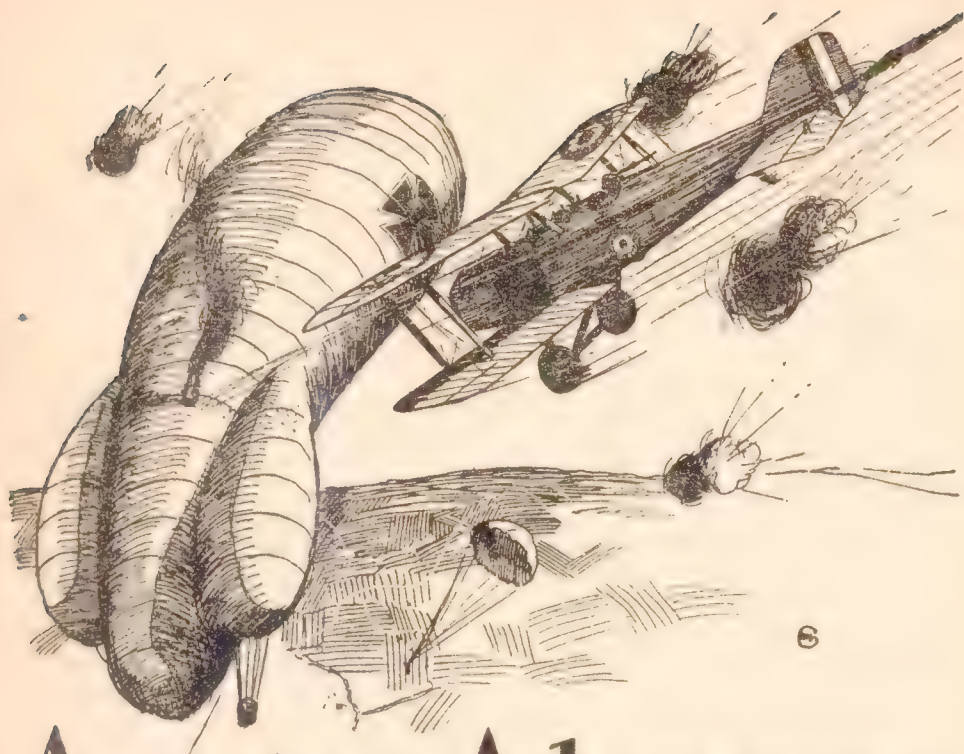
"Well," said the farmer, "I've a sack of peas he can have."

"Are they shelled?" asked the idle one.

"No," said the farmer.

The lazy man turned to his friends.

"Carry on with the funeral," he said.



American Adventurers

FRANK LUKE, JR. SECOND LIEUTENANT UNITED STATES AIR SERVICE

By Boyd Taylor

THE Twenty-seventh Squadron, First Pursuit Group, United States air service had been transferred to the town of Rembercourt, just south of Verdun. It was quartered in an old air-drome that had been abandoned by the French. The Twenty-seventh was to begin activity in the new sector with the St. Mihiel drive on September 12th.

All through the night before, the flyers could hear the tramping of countless hordes that plodded heavily through the mud. Motor trucks strained and spluttered; artillery creaked and horses snorted. At last the day came.

The clouds threatened; the air was thick and gray. The weather was im-

possible for the usual airplane formation. Through the low-lying mist, an artillery attack sent up a feverish flicker into the pale sky. It was an ominous day, but it didn't restrain Lieutenant Frank Luke, United States flying corps.

Early in the morning he was pacing up and down like a caged tiger. His yellow hair was damp with fog; his blue eyes gleamed with determination. He was only about five feet five. In his heavy flying suit, he seemed like a small boy in play clothes. He moved impatiently. He could hardly wait to get into the air.

Finally the plane was trundled forward. Luke adjusted his helmet and

climbed in. The motor roared and spat. He was off. Into the gray morning he mounted. Back and forth above the festering landscape he flew, looking for enemy aircraft. Below him the trenches crawled, hideous in their rugged griminess. The four years of struggle had tortured the fields horribly. Frank Luke searched tirelessly.

To the east, he spotted an enemy observation balloon. Here was prey. He turned tail and sped back to the airdrome and reported. He was told that the balloon was well guarded, and that our planes had already attacked it unsuccessfully.

Luke straightened his wiry body. His blue eyes became points of fire. He volunteered to strafe the German sausage. A few minutes later he was off, soaring into the sky, accompanied by his "buddy."

The sun swept away the gray mist. High in the air, the two planes drove. Luke discovered the great balloon through a rift of clouds.

Like a plummet he dropped. Straight down he dived. The wind screamed through his plane. Every second the momentum carried him faster. Down, down, he plunged through the clouds. The earth jumped at him.

His heavy gun jammed. He grasped the light gun and turned a shower of bullets into the sausage. But still the vast spread of fabric humped under him.

He fed his motor the "sauce" and winged upward. Shells burst around him. The antiaircraft guns on the ground took up the defense. German planes hurried to the rescue. He must be quick.

Once more Luke swooped upon the balloon. His guns sprayed a steady stream of bullets into the big sausage. The gas bag burst into flames and crumpled to the earth. Luke darted away like an arrow. He flew low, just clearing the trees and housetops. He

reached his airdrome safely, and leaped from his machine.

Luke had tasted the joy of bringing down a balloon. Strafing the big German sausages was much more dangerous than shooting down a plane. The gas bags were well protected. Anti-aircraft guns surrounded them; airplanes were detailed to guard them. When an enemy plane approached an observation balloon, the air seethed. Shells shrilled through the air and bullets ripped at the invader.

ON the 14th of September, Frank Luke got his second balloon. He started out with a group of American planes, but just before the objective was reached, a flight of German airplanes came out and engaged his escort.

Luke saw what had happened and smiled. He liked fighting alone. He soared into the sky. Over the German sausage he tipped his plane and dived sharply. His guns worked perfectly. A hail of blazing bullets ripped into the balloon. Lower he swooped, his machine gun spitting a stream of fire.

The balloon crumpled in a mass of flame. Frank Luke swung still lower and raked the ground forces with his machine gun. Antiaircraft guns sent shells and builets screaming at him, but he scuttled toward the American lines.

At the airdrome he found that his plane had been riddled and torn with shells and bullets. He took another machine and started out for another victim. Again his escort was engaged by a German flight, and again he soared on like a great eagle. Another observation balloon flamed in the skies and flopped to the ground.

The ground defense was like a volcano. Screaming shells ripped through his wings and tore at his fuselage. Shrapnel whined by unnoticed. He dropped close to the ground and headed toward his lines. He found that this plane, too, was unfit for further service.

The next day he was back at his old job.

Frank Luke knew all the tricks now. Two new German balloons hung in the sky. Just as he left the airdrome that afternoon, he told the men to be on the lookout at five minutes past five.

On the minute, a flare in the darkening sky marked the passing of the first balloon. The sound of bursting shells filled the air; the flames of the incendiaries lighted the evening sky.

Then came the drone of a motor. Luke was coming home. Closer roared his engine. Like a flash he streaked through the dusk with five Germans in pursuit, but the Huns refused to come over the American lines.

Luke landed, reported, but his motor still crackled and hummed. Without a moment's rest he started back for the other sausage. In a few minutes another flare marked the finish of the second balloon.

Once more he found his machine torn and riddled with bullets—totally unserviceable. He grinned boyishly, took out another plane and begged for permission to attack one more observation craft.

Accompanied by his buddy, he started out. Darkness fell and shut out the sight of the torn and battle wracked landscape. He flew straight on toward the big balloon. It was being hauled down for the night.

Luke turned the nose down. His fingers gripped the triggers. His machine gun sprayed bullets until the muzzle glowed. Antiaircraft guns boomed. Bullets whined and whistled; shells screamed; but still he held the nose of his plane at the big bag. With a sigh it fluttered. A roaring pillar of flame reached into the darkened sky.

Luke turned tail and scuttled homeward. He had shot down three balloons in one day. The next afternoon at dusk, he went out and bagged two more.

All through the Allied lines his fame spread. The name of Frank Luke inspired courage and fearlessness. The enemy knew him, too, and were determined to get him at all costs. He was a menace to German efficiency.

THE mechanics at the airdrome took especial pride in keeping Luke's plane in tiptop shape. Yet Luke himself often spent his spare time with them, helping, watching every detail. He practiced with his machine gun. Plane, gun, and man were one perfect fighting unit.

On September 16th the enemy prepared a trap. Two new observation balloons were sent up, but underneath, the ground was infested with antiaircraft guns; a large fleet of planes lay in ambush. Luke's eyes gleamed at the sight of the two huge sausages that hung over Three-Fingered Lake.

"Coupez!"

It was the same call that the mechanics heard day after day, but they sprang to action. It was Lieutenant Luke who sat in the pilot's seat. His reckless blue eyes sparkled. He adjusted his helmet over his yellow hair.

"Contact!" he called.

Once more the mechanics gave the big propeller a twist. The powerful engine crackled into life. It throbbed with restrained power as the pilot warmed it up. The blocks were kicked aside; Luke opened his throttle; the motor roared. The plane raced down the field and glided into the air.

It was late in the afternoon; the clouds hung low. Across the fields to the east could be seen those two balloons hanging over Three-Fingered Lake—a tempting bait.

Luke was accompanied by his buddy. Up they climbed, above the clouds, then straight toward the lake. Above the water, they separated. Luke drove straight at the big gas bag, while his friend stayed up to watch and guard

against attacks from the Boche planes. Like an avenging demon, Luke sped toward the German balloon.

The Huns were ready. From the swampy land below a deadly fire roared. Luke dived through fearlessly. His machine screamed in the wind. He was diving at a rate of nearly two hundred miles an hour. Every strut groaned from the terrific pace. His hand clung to the triggers. The balloon was undamaged.

From a seething volcano below, fragments of shell shot up. Bullets whistled past the dauntless pilot. His hand grasped the joystick; his feet kicked at the rudder bar. The plane's nose eased up. Skyward she shot, still higher she climbed.

A quick *renversement* and down she came again on her nose. He held his fire until he got closer, this time. Momentarily it seemed as if he would drive into the big balloon. His gun sowed fire into the fabric, but without telling effect.

The sound of the whirling propeller echoed against the big fabric surface. Just in time the nose turned up, and Luke climbed into the sky. The hail of shrapnel and bullets shrieked past him. Now and again he felt, rather than heard, the ripping of his plane's wing fabric. Still he sped upward.

Once more he dropped earthward like a plummet. His hand pressed the triggers. A red spear shot steadily from the muzzle of his machine gun. The balloon burst into flames.

Quickly he eased back the joystick and zoomed over the crumpled balloon. He was looking for his friend, but he was nowhere in sight. But Frank Luke saw something else.

Six Boche planes were coming at him. They were driving in from the west. The second balloon was to the east. A daring plan came into his mind. He would make his escape by way of the remaining balloon, take a crack at

downing it before the Huns got at him, then scoot off homeward.

Luke kept straight east and permitted the Germans to cut him off at the south. At the second balloon, he hovered in the air for a split-second, then dived headlong. Like an angry eagle the plane screamed toward its prey. The big bag seemed rushing upward, the ground rose closer. Luke's fingers were on the triggers.

A pillar of fire lifted itself into the dusk. The flare illuminated the battle-torn fields. Like a great dead beast, the wracked and blistered countryside lay exposed in that burst of light.

Luke zoomed away from the blazing gas bag; shells shrieked after him; bullets cut through the fuselage, but he flew safely through the rain of missiles and winged his way homeward.

He discovered that escape was completely cut off by the six planes. From the north he saw three more Huns speeding toward him. And then he saw his buddy.

HIS friend had seen the six German planes approaching but thought that Luke would escape to the south and not attempt the second balloon. He had fired his warning light, but in the midst of the antiaircraft shells and blazing incendiaries, Luke had failed to see the signal.

When his buddy realized this, he flew off to attack the three planes from the north.

Luke saw his friend's plane get the direct fire from the Huns. Saw him hesitate in his flight. Slowly the machine turned over, burst into flames and went down.

Luke's eyes blazed cold fire. He no longer wanted to return to the air-drome. He hurled himself upon the three German planes. They had the advantage in altitude and in numbers; but Frank Luke was undaunted.

He went at them, climbing upward

and firing as he advanced. He set upon one and clung doggedly to the tail. He rained bullets until he saw the plane falling blindly to the ground.

The other two were upon Luke instantly. Their tracer bullets flashed by his head. He rocketed up and dashed down on a Hun plane, firing as he struck. The second enemy went down with Luke's first burst of fire. The third German turned tail and lit out for home.

Luke let him go, but there was cold fury in his heart. His eyes blazed with anger. He had seen his buddy shot down in flames.

In less time than a minute he had brought down two Boche planes. He turned to look for the six that had approached from the east. They had flown on, leaving his destruction to the smaller group.

To the north of Verdun he could see the soft white clouds of smoke from the Allied batteries. He might help there. He flew up in time to see five French planes about to attack a heavy German photographing plane, but the six Huns sped to the rescue. Luke was directly above the big plane.

He drove down. As he dived he held both triggers back. The observing machine turned over in a *vrille* and crashed. Luke's gasoline was exhausted, his machine was battered and weakened.

Luke was forced to land and return to the airdrome in an automobile. In less than half an hour he had brought down two balloons, two fighting planes and a two-seater photographing plane.

His victories meant nothing. Five aircraft was no triumph when he had lost his friend. His eyes looked hurt and deep lines twisted about his young mouth. He was sent to Paris for a rest.

Three or four days he played, but he itched to get back into the fight. He was rested and ready for battle.

The Argonne offensive was under way. Back with the Twenty-seventh, he won two victories in the first few days.

On the afternoon of September 29th, three German observation balloons were reported. Frank Luke immediately volunteered to strafe them.

In the half light of early evening he sat in the pilot's seat, his engine roaring, the propeller racing. His face shone between the leather helmet and the upturned collar of his flying jacket. His teeth flashed white.

His commanding officer saw him ready to take off and ordered him to wait, as it was too early for such a dangerous mission. Then the major flew back to headquarters.

Scarcely had he disappeared, when Luke's big machine thundered into life once more. Out of the hangar he shot.

The machine skipped along the runway. Luke tilted the joystick and rose into the air. He streaked toward the German lines.

As he passed over the American artillery position, Luke dropped a note. He asked them to watch for the blazing balloons. On he winged toward his quarry. His approach was noted.

A GROUP of ten Boche planes met him above the big sausage. Like hornets, the enemy came in upon him. Desperately he rose, straight up, then banked.

As he turned he was back of a Hun. His gun spat its glowing death into the dusk. One attacker turned and dived sickeningly. A trail of flames burst from the falling German—a brilliant spectacle in the heavens.

Still the attackers pushed him; there were nine left now. He darted away, shot one and came back in a *renversement*. Once more his steady hand gripped the triggers of his machine gun. Speeding bullets cut into the body of the enemy plane. The Hun pilot

slumped forward. The plane fell into a wild spin and crashed to the earth.

Not for an instant had Luke forgotten his objective. The big gas bags floated awkwardly below him. He was safe from the attacking planes for a minute. The ground batteries set up their angry bark. Shells shrieked at the lone American. Heedlessly, he dived at the first balloon. His gun sent its sharp *tack-tack* through the boom of the antiaircraft guns below.

Closer he came. The gun mercilessly spat flaming bullets into the side of the gas bag. A soft sound, and rushing flames flung themselves high into the sky. The balloon crashed.

Through the air, thick with missiles, he bored his way. Back into the sky he climbed. His motor sang a hymn of victory. His hands gripped the controls. Straight at the second sausage he dropped. His aim was deadly. The big bag shuddered and collapsed.

His feet pressed the rudder bar and his hand was like a part of the joystick. It took expert flying to pull the streaking plane up. Her nose went skyward obediently. The taut wires sang; straining struts groaned. Up the pilot took her, up amid the furious shelling from the batteries below.

There was still another balloon and he must have that before he attempted to skip off home.

The group of Boche machines hovered above like a cloud of wasps.

They dared not dive and risk being shot by their own batteries. They contented themselves with showering Luke with machine-gun bullets from long range.

Over the last balloon, he swooped. Like a silver hawk in the night the plane shot down. Straight for the prey, Luke drove. He rained bullets into the gas bag. Once more a column of flame

flung itself into the sky. The balloon dropped to earth.

But Luke was hit. His hands gripped the controls tightly. His firm chin stood out. They hadn't got him yet. He must make for the airdrome.

Flying low, he darted off homeward. Not half an hour had passed since he left the hangar. In the afterglow he desperately urged his crippled plane toward the American lines.

Skimming the housetops over the village of Maux, he was potted at by German soldiers. Desperately wounded, he turned his machine gun upon them. Half a dozen dropped in the street.

Beyond the town lay a broad meadow. He must come down. Once more he tugged at the joystick and kicked at the rudder bar, but the plane refused to respond. Desperately, he fed the sauce. The ground seemed rising.

The Boches realized his condition and rushed out to make a capture. As the wounded machine came to rest, they rushed forward and called upon Luke to surrender.

Half falling from his seat, Frank Luke jerked his automatic from its place in the cockpit. The pistol barked viciously.

The odds were too great. They rushed him. German soldiers fell, but a dozen rifles spat flame and lead. Frank Luke crumpled. The uneven battle was over.

He died, but he left a record of bravery and courage that has never been surpassed.

Posthumously, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross with the Oak Leaf Cluster, and, also, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest tribute that the United States can pay to its brave.

Do you like these articles about "American Adventurers"? Write to the editors and tell them what you think about this series.



Film That Laugh

by Walter A. Sinclair

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER I.

THE MERRY HA-HA.

DAVE KENDALL first ran into his newest "subject" in an odd manner—also in a sedan. The Hollywood publicity expert was driving up to the front entrance of the Sky-Hi Film lot. The man was thrust violently upon his notice—likewise upon his car bumper.

A burly gateman was giving a man in make-up whiskers "the bum's rush," so vigorously that it ran him across the sidewalk. From the curb he tottered off in the path of Kendall's car. It struck.

"Trying to bend my bumper?" demanded Dave Kendall, who had braked instantly. His tone was bantering though his keen brown eyes showed concern as he raised his victim, dusting him off. Kendall's wide mouth curved

in a winning grin which toned down the belligerent look imparted by a knobby chin. Kendall had a way with him, which was a big asset in his work of putting over picture stars.

A deep, spontaneous laugh greeted his inquiry. Dave stared, amazed, while he tugged at his prematurely white forelock. Then he, too, laughed. This stranger's chortle was infectious.

"Where's the camera?" demanded Kendall, looking around for that orthodox witness of comedy bumps. There was none in sight. Kendall's broad brow puckered in perplexity. His aquiline nose dilated as if scenting a story in this merry casualty.

"This isn't even a rehearsal. I don't get a dime for that bump," the man said, laughing. "The joke's on me—Joe King. Your car packs a mean knock, but every knock is a boost."

"Brother, did I hit your funny bone?" asked Kendall. He tugged his white forelock decisively. "If you're gleefully counting on suing me and living in sybaritic luxury, I warn you that this can be insured. A troupe of stony-hearted lawyers will spend millions for defense but not one cent for tribute."

"I was just giving myself the merry ha-ha," explained Joe King, resetting the crêpe beard on his droll, round face. "I tried to crash the gate by hiding behind this phony brush and telling the gateman that I was Hap Day in make-up. Told him the press agent was staging that old gag about 'gateman fails to recognize star in make-up.' He gave me the raus."

"No wonder," Kendall laughed. "Hap ran a high temperament last night and quit after razzing Harry Eckman, the big boss here. The gateman probably had orders to bounce him if he showed up."

Dave didn't add that he was hurrying to ask the Sky-Hi executives to let him build up, with publicity's exploitation, a successor to their departed temperamental star comedian, Hap Day.

"That's big news!" exclaimed Joe King. "You must be on the inside to get that tip before the industry hears it."

"I'm Dave Kendall," that worthy announced.

"The publicity expert!" cried Joe King, with awe which was a tribute. "I wish you were promoting me. Say, if you're driving into the lot, take me along. I want to ask a director for a rôle."

"Why not try the casting office?" asked Kendall.

"No chance there," answered King. "Anyway, 'Roaring' Burch does his own casting. You could hide me in your sedan disguised as a bale of clippings. And to think, I paid Day's dresser ten bucks to make me up like Hap, hoping I could double for him!"

KENDALL smuggled King in at a vehicle gate, though a gateman said that a new rule barred visitors' cars. They made too much noise near the sound stages. However, he admitted Kendall, who always kept up friendly relations with all gatemen.

After parking the sedan between two stages, and telling King to wait, Kendall walked to the administration building. In a corridor he buttonholed Martin Winn, the general manager, who was darting to a conference with Harry Eckman, the corporation's head. Winn tried to dodge, and then continued to plow ahead, dragging Kendall with him. Hanging on was one of the best things Dave Kendall did.

"Can't stop now," snapped Winn. "We're all upset here."

"About Hap Day running out. That's why I dropped in," said Kendall. The general manager gaped at this keen news expert, who always had first tips on anything big. "Got a successor for him?"

"Have you?" parried Winn, who had seen Kendall produce stars as cleverly as a magician taking a rabbit from a silk hat.

"Sure," responded Kendall. He always answered "sure" because positiveness is the first ingredient of publicity. At the moment he hadn't a ghost of a candidate to succeed the well-known Hap Day, yet he confidently answered: "Sure. When can I trot him out?"

"Nothing to-day. No use," rebuffed Winn, disengaging himself and speeding onward. "Eckman's waiting for me. Going East where Day can't get at him to square it."

"Tell Eckman I've got a wow ready for him," called Kendall. He turned briskly away, his swiftly moving mind leaping back to that rumbling, infectious laugh which his car had bumped out of Joe King. That laugh had made him laugh—it could make others guffaw. Now that pictures were audible, some-

thing besides comic pantomime had a chance in comedy.

A screen clown whose infectious laugh started audiences laughing at the first sequence could put over any sound picture comedy. Thinking this, Kendall hurried out to gather Joe King under his wing without delay. As he came in sight of his sedan, he released a groan.

King had popped out suddenly at a passing man, a big fellow whose bull neck protruded through a V-collar of a multi-hued sweater. Plus-fours, golf hose and striped shoes proclaimed him a director. He was Roaring Burch, no less. As Joe King unexpectedly popped into his path, Burch handed him a wallop in the face. Kendall's candidate for comedy stardom flopped.

"What's the idea, Mr. Burch?" he demanded.

"Great Kleig! Who are you?" belted Burch, upon hearing King's voice. He stared dazedly. "I thought it was Hap Day."

"Nope. It's Jonah Day," whooped King, unleashing his laugh. Tearing off the false beard, he guffawed: "Joke's on me again."

"If that's the way you feel about it," began Burch gruffly but unsteadily. He faltered, swept out of his grouch by that epidemic laugh. A moment later he, too, was guffawing.

"I'm Joe King. You gave me a bit in 'Always a Goof,'" reminded the laugh volcano. "Can't you use me in your current opus?"

"Here? This madhouse?" countered Burch, resuming his savage air. "I'm quitting. Washed up. Through with this bunch."

"I heard Hap Day quit," put in Kendall, joining them. He knew these sounds. "Weren't you directing Hap?"

"That nitwit!" snorted Burch. "Nobody can direct him, now that he has to speak lines without having me tell him what to say. I got mad last night and forgot the mike was catching my broad-

cast, telling him what I thought of him. That spoiled a sound sequence we were finishing. Eckman horned in. All off!"

"I heard that Eckman called down Hap," prompted Kendall.

"Eckman spoiled a whole sequence on me the day before," howled Burch. "You know he has hay fever. He came snooping in just as I was finishing our first sequence. Before he could stop himself, he fired a burst of kerchoos, and all my footage went blooey. So, when he razzed Hap last night, Hap bawled him out and told him to take his hay fever for a sea voyage until we finished."

"One word led to a complete noise sequence, and Hap quit. I got the blame, so I'm quitting. Just left the office. The nerve—telling me that my hollering runs up production costs. What d'they expect a director to do—use hypnotism?"

"What're they going to do with the opus?" asked Kendall. He knew the comedy was scheduled on the company's program and had to be made. Special sets had been built which could not be junked except at a big loss. "Won't be easy to fill your place."

"Dave, art thou yea-ing me?" parried Burch with cynical suspicion. "I'm going to hand you a laugh, gratis. They're handing my megaphone over to Otto Schmalz. He's been honing to do a comedy ever since finishing his super-speakie 'Jonah's Whale,' which gets its premier next week."

"What chance have we American directors? Here's a guy with a limburger dialect. Yet I have to hand it to these Dutchmen for being systematic and thorough. You'd never guess. He's learned to talk deaf-and-dumb finger language this past month in order to do silent directing."

"There're plenty of dumb actors, but I don't know any deaf ones," admitted Kendall thoughtfully. "So what talent

can understand him except deaf mutes? And they won't do now in the talkies."

"Wait till they try to direct dog and horse stars by finger wiggles," grunted Burch, stalking angrily away.

CHAPTER II.

ANCHORS AWAY!

A LOUD, pervading chuckle beside him caused Kendall to turn. Then he grinned audibly. Joe King's right eye now was ringed by a lovely mouse which gave humorous distinction to a hitherto commonplace countenance. Smartly, Kendall announced:

"That black eye gives your pan just the right comedy touch for your characterization. From now on, put it on with make-up as your individual trademark. It's funny and easy, like Chaplin's derby and mustache, Lloyd's specs, or Ray Griffith's silk hat. We'll build up your characterization, but this'll do for a starter. Everybody laughs at a black eye."

"What d'you mean?" gasped King, eagerly hopeful.

"I'm going to make you a comedy star," proclaimed, Dave.

"Yes, yes. Go on," urged King. "In fact, a flock of yeses. And they told me there wasn't any Santa Claus!"

Dave Kendall pushed the dizzy candidate for stardom into his sedan and drove out of the studio lot.

"Guard that laugh like it was set with diamonds," he commanded. "If you get tonsilitis, you might just as well be a giraffe."

"Yes, teacher," burred King. "And what do I do first?"

"First, get a teacher of deaf-and-dumb finger talk," stipulated Dave. "You've got to master it in a week. Got to! If a deaf-mute kid can learn it in a few months—if Schmalz can in a month, you can in a week's intensive work. Do nothing else, and remember the big prize you're shooting for. When

you've mastered it, you'll be the one clown in Hollywood who can savvy Schmalz's direction. You'll grab Hap Day's comedy rôle."

Once he had taken up the creation of a new star, Kendall went at it with the intensity of an artist creating a masterpiece. King was no stranger to picture lots, having infested them, doing bits for the past few years. Too easy-going to push himself, King was clever enough to let an expert put him over. He followed orders implicitly, and soon reported he was mastering the sign language.

"You've got to be letter perfect by next Wednesday night," ruled Kendall, when his client reported at the publicity expert's office. "You're going to stutter your stuff at the premier of 'Jonah's Whale.' That's when Schmalz will learn you're alive."

Dave Kendall prepared with characteristic decisiveness and speed. Being on friendly terms with a box-office man at the theater that was to stage the premier, he had bought two seats directly ahead of Schmalz's. These ducats were turned over to Joe King and a trusted pal. A jolly understanding with a police commander clinched arrangements.

OPENING night arrived. A big premier in Hollywood is an event unmatched anywhere else. It is a spectacle witnessed by ten or twenty thousand more persons than the audience which attends. As early as five in the afternoon the vanguard preëmpted the best sidewalk observation posts closest to the theater entrance.

By eight o'clock the sidewalks on both sides of the boulevard were banked solidly with thousands of non-paying sightseers. They were there to see movie stars and big noises of the pictures attend a first night. Police and ropes held back the curb throng.

Dozens of big searchlights crossed

powerful beams slantwise against blue night sky, forming a lattice of radiance. Up on foothills overlooking Hollywood, batteries of colored searchlights provided imitation aurora borealises.

In the theater's forecourt, the manager greeted his star audience. He was backed by a glare of Kleig lights, and a battery of movie cameras filming trailers to advertise the opus elsewhere. Loud-speakers amplified the microphone announcer's introduction of arriving stars.

Studio camera-cars cruised back and forth in the street before the entrance, shooting footage of this gala scene. Flash lights boomed as the still cameras joined in. A steady stream of expensive cars snailed up to the entrance, where elaborately garbed lackeys assisted out the arrivals. These gave their names to be relayed to the announcer.

Then the loud speakers blared them forth to the gaping throng. As the elect passed him, the announcer asked special ones to speak a few words into the mike. These nifties were relayed not only from loud speakers on the street, but over a radio broadcast covering the land.

Sandwiched between two limousines, which halted at the film temple's portal, came a motorcycle with bathtub side-car. From it stepped Joe King, immaculate in correct evening garb, and acting as haughty as though he were alighting from a royal coach.

At sight of this dignity out of absurdity, the crowd guffawed in welcome relief from a surfeit of grandeur. Dave Kendall, standing beside the microphone man, a good friend, nudged him.

"Joe King, the new comedy star, now entering the theater," the surprised ether conveyed to listening millions. Those who never before had heard that name assumed they ought to know it.

"Won't you say a few words, Joe?" asked the announcer.

"Hello, folks," said Joe into the mike. "They say one swallow doesn't make a summer, but one swallow made 'Jonah's Whale' a super-talkie. I bet the swell limousine trade stars here to-night know their whales, because they came in Fisher bodies. Ha! ha!"

His infectious laugh started responsive roars across the land. Joe King went inside and took a seat next to a silent young man waiting for him. They conversed animatedly in sign language. While the picture was in progress, King's fingers wiggled as he told "what they're saying" in the talking sequences.

"A new kind uff pest, yet," grumbled a voice behind them. "Zuccesser to der von vot read tidles outd loudt."

That wasn't so good. For the speaker was Otto Schmalz, the director King had been planted to impress. Presently, however, King used finger talk to say 'Jonah's Whale' was undoubtedly the greatest talkie every filmed and that the director was a genius. This time there were no harsh comments from behind.

When the picture ended, and King turned to leave, he was rewarded by a 'friendly nod from' the beaming Schmalz. This King imparted in a whisper, as he brushed past Dave Kendall standing in the lobby. Kendall didn't look overjoyed. He just had learned from lobby gossip that Hap Day was sending emissaries with olive branches to Sky-Hi Film. Day was paving the way to being invited back into the fold.

Nor was it just rumor. In the lobby Kendall saw Day telling Schmalz what a wizard at talkie films he was. As the director moved on, smiling smugly, Hap Day spied Kendall and edged over to him.

Superciliously, the comedian sneered: "I hear you're grooming my successor. Lay off."

"Oh, yeah?" drawled Kendall. "I heard you quit, so I supposed the field

was open. Eckman or Winn have some say about it."

"They're going to beg me to come back," bragged Day. "And if you promote anybody to them for my place, I'll have you blacklisted by all the stars in pictures. Laugh that off."

"I've got a man to do my laughing," retorted Kendall. "And he'll soon be making audiences laugh. Which is more than can be said of some star comedians with tight hats. Remember the saying, 'He who laughs last is the fellow who gets the job.'"

"He who laughs last is slow at seeing a joke," corrected Hap Day.

With that, he stalked out, leaving Kendall thoughtful. Hap Day had a public which wouldn't let Sky-Hi drop him for an unknown unless said public was sold on the newcomer. Selling King was Kendall's job, and though he knew it was a big order, he vowed to do it. Hap Day's threat had made this a matter of professional pride with Dave.

Before Kendall went to bed that night, he worked his grapevine system of inside information, and learned that Eckman was in New York. That would make it impossible for Day to get to the Sky-Hi chief unless he crossed the country. And Day was busy in Hollywood repairing a line of retreat from his high horse.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKING INTO PRINT.

WHILE breakfasting leisurely the following morning, Dave Kendall worked the telephones to put his exploitation program into motion. Knowing what was what in publicity circles, he telephoned to a fellow space grabber. This friend was projecting press for a campaign to raise funds for a deaf-mute institute. He cheerfully agreed to cooperate in a little plan Dave suggested for their mutual benefit.

That day Otto Schmalz received an invitation to address the boys of the deaf-mute institute in sign language. They had learned, said the inviter, of Mr. Schmalz's marvelous feat of mastering finger talk in one month.

Would he be so kind as to demonstrate it in a sign address to-morrow on what talkies would mean to deaf mutes who found such solace in silent drama? Schmalz hungered for some personal publicity about his unique accomplishment. He accepted.

When Director Schmalz was ushered to the platform at the deaf-mutes' assembly, by strange coincidence Joe King was being introduced. This screen comedian, said the chairman, was the only one in pictures who understood sign language—except the trained animals. He had kindly consented to entertain the boys with a monologue before they were addressed by the famous director, Mr. Schmalz.

King hopped briskly to it. Fingers twinkling, he reeled off a convulsing monologue which Kendall had written, borrowing freely from the best sure-fire vaudeville acts. Occasionally King would seem to forget and would speak orally. Then he would remember and would laugh infectiously at his slip.

Among those who could hear and were swept into laughter by this, was Herr Direktor Schmalz. The latter appreciated having an audience warmed up to a receptive mood for his own star act. And King alluded to the speaker to follow, telling what a wonder Schmalz was.

Flash lights boomed as King ended with a time-tried vaudeville wow. Dave Kendall, acting through the institute's publicity man, had made sure that the newspapers would get pictures of King "leaving them laughing."

Schmalz went on to a smiling audience, and was received well. He explained that directors no longer could speak their orders because the micro-

phone would register it on a talkie film. Actors read their spoken titles from blackboards placed outside the camera's range. He complimented the preceding speaker for learning sign language with which he, Schmalz, intended to direct talkies. Applause followed his conclusion.

"Mr. Schmalz, will you pose for some pictures?" asked the institute's press agent. "The newspaper photographers want to pose you showing our boys how you direct in sign language. Suppose you demonstrate it with Mr. King as your star."

Schmalz cheerfully complied. He supposed that this man wanted publicity for the institute's fund campaign, using the great Schmalz in a benevolent rôle. Schmalz never suspected that in an adjoining room Kendall was directing every move. Several pictures were shot, each photographer wanting exclusive poses.

"You are funny," pronounced Schmalz when King was introduced. "That laugh would go beeg in talkies. If you had a big name, I would cast you now for a beeg comedy I am making for Sky-Hi—the one Burch started. Bublizidy andt exbloitation would make you."

"Dave Kendall is the man to do it," cried the institute's press agent. Schmalz nodded. He had heard of that expert. "You discover a new star, Mr. Schmalz, and Kendall makes the fact famous."

"Why, Dave's in the nex'——" began a passing photographer who overheard. A violent nudge in the ribs silenced him.

"If you can get this Kendall to exbloit you, meet me to-morrow adt Sky-Hi studio," said Schmalz, as he hurried away.

Joe King bowed politely, stepped calmly into the next room, where he turned cart wheels, and then leap-frogged over Kendall.

THE next day's newspapers printed half tones of Schmalz directing King in sign language. Any graphic presentation which average readers could grasp about the highly technical talkies was welcomed by picture pages. These photos were spread to the nation, broadcast by art-service syndicates as well as by telephoto.

New York and other distant cities that day viewed newspaper half tones of Joe King, the new film comedian. One cynical caption writer printed under his cut:

STAR CAN 'YES'
IN SIGN TALK.

There were accounts printed, also, for Schmalz had said some interesting things. Joe King's part in this unique affair was noted. Because he appeared with Schmalz, the newspapers took it for granted he was a Sky-Hi star, and said so. This misunderstanding was not overlooked at the Sky-Hi executive office, where it created a stir.

Hence, Kendall was not kept waiting when he took King there that day for a conference with Schmalz. Instead of being taken to that director's bungalow, they were ushered up to the sanctum of General Manager Winn.

The executive was scowling. "See here, Dave, you can't force any one on me," stormed Winn. He and Kendall had matched wits in the past, and the memory of defeats rankled. "Printing fakes about us signing this man."

"The newspapers did that, all by their dear selves. And you can't afford to call your friends, the press, liars," reminded Kendall. "Mr. Schmalz can tell you he recommended me to Joe yesterday after the whole thing was over."

"Hooey! Your trade-mark is on this from the start," said Winn, with a wry grin. "I remember, you said that you'd get——"

"And I did," cut in Kendall. With-

out letting Winn interrupt, he poured out a terse, convincing sales talk. He was ready to flood the land with publicity, building up a name for Joe King before the public forgot this finger-talk story.

Winn fought stubbornly, though his eyes betrayed that he recognized the strong points of Kendall's argument. Prejudice ruled him. In the midst of their debate, Winn was called on the phone. As he talked, a triumphant light flashed in his eyes. This he tried to hide.

"Send him up in five minutes," Winn ordered into the mouthpiece. Then he asked King and Schmalz to leave him alone with Kendall to conclude their conference.

When the others had withdrawn to the anteroom, Winn told Kendall he would give Joe King the comedy starring rôle deserted by Hap Day. It was only a verbal agreement, Winn asserting that a contract of such importance would have to await Eckman's signature. And Eckman was in New York. Winn bowed out Kendall, who eagerly rushed King to the street before telling the good news. As they passed through the reception room, the receptionist called:

"Mr. Winn will see you now. Go right up, Mr. Day."

And Hap Day walked in, smiling confidently.

"Dirty work at the double-cross roads," murmured Kendall. "Winn got me alone before promising, and it was only an oral agreement without witnesses. Then he calls in Hap Day. Which means I've got to fight to put over my latest. And I will."

No defensive fighting, Kendall decided. Before night he released his first story about Joe King's being starred by Sky-Hi Film in a super-talkie comedy. Feature stories about King being the first screen star to learn finger language in order to take silent

direction, were released. Kendall had prepared all this in advance.

Also, he sent out a series of matrices with short wise-cracks illustrated by comic photos of King, titled *Joe King's Jokings*. Glossy prints for fan magazines and for newspapers' film news were added to the flood. King posed for an advertising photograph, showing him testing a cigarette while he wore earmuffs "so nobody could tell him the brand."

Of course, Kendall didn't do all this work single-handed, but had assistants carry out orders while he furnished the ideas. All of which cost a lot of money, which Kendall was staking on winning. If King got the rôle, he could refund all expenses from a big salary. If King didn't get it, Kendall was sunk.

CHAPTER IV.

GREAT ARE SLOGANS!

THREE days later the blow fell.

King reported, hardly able to whisper, his laugh a ghostly croak. He'd celebrated on the preceding night, and at a club. Two friendly strangers had forced their society on him. Later, at the height of a joy ride, they threw him into a park lake, dragged him gayly out and induced him to join them in song. When Joe awoke, his voice was A. W. O. L.

Kendall identified the strangers as two of Hap Day's yes men. He bundled King off to a specialist who worked wonders with electric lights, and left the comic to have his pipes thawed out. Ordering King never to speak to him again if he couldn't recover his voice, Kendall went about his preparations.

A paragraph in the motion-picture news gave him a new chill. The printed rumor was that Eckman was preparing to go abroad in search of stories. To meet this situation, Kendall telephoned to some brother publicity men

in commercial lines outside of the picture industry. Then he went to Sky-Hi Film Co.'s offices, determined to demand a legal contract without further delay.

Being alone, Kendall was allowed to enter without sending up his name. He did publicity for two big Sky-Hi stars, and ordinarily he had the run of the lot. Thus it happened that he reached the anteroom of Winn's suite unannounced. A secretary detained him—Mr. Winn was talking on long distance to New York. He was, indeed. His raised voice penetrating a door, chilled Kendall.

"Don't worry, Eckman, I haven't signed this fellow," Winn was saying. "I just gave a verbal promise, but that won't bind us. I did it to whip Day back into line, and it worked. Hap is begging to be taken back. What? You don't know about that? Yes, I'll wait until I hear from you. Oh, that's just Dave Kendall's publicity—Clever, yes, but we can deny it."

This long-distance talk ended after Winn listened silently for a few minutes while his absent chief gave orders. Then Kendall was announced and admitted. Winn tried to look innocent.

"I didn't mean to listen, but I couldn't help hearing what you were yelling," stated Kendall, coming to the point.

Winn looked defiant while the publicity expert demanded a show-down. For half an hour, Kendall used all of his great powers of persuasion to hold Winn to his word. Their debate was interrupted by the arrival of Joe King, who had followed his agent there.

Dave looked apprehensively at his candidate as King entered silently. If the man had no voice left, he had chosen a most unfortunate time to come.

"I meant to give you a contract, though I didn't promise," said Winn, suavely addressing King. "But I can't gamble on you, an unknown, without

Eckman's sanction. On the other hand, Hap Day has a name, exploitation, and a public.

"When he came to his senses the other day, Hap decided to go to Mr. Eckman and make peace. So he jumped a train for New York. He's due to arrive at four p. m. to-morrow. And Eckman sails for Europe at three to-morrow afternoon."

A moment of stunned silence followed. Then a roar of mirth.

"The joke's on Hap and me!" guffawed King, letting go another howl of laughter and showing, too, an improvement in speech.

It was too much for Winn to resist. "You're a good sport," he gasped, when he had controlled the laugh in which he had joined. "And Dave is right—your laugh would be a big asset in setting off audiences.

"Eckman is sailing to avoid Hap and to consider his case uninfluenced. He'll send me a radio from the liner. I wish you could have seen him, because I think you and Dave could have sold him on you."

"We're going to see him," snapped Kendall. "It's two o'clock here—five o'clock in New York. We've got twenty-two hours."

BY telephone he ordered his assistants to release a big story for which he dictated the high lights:

Joe King, film comedian, hops off on non-stop flight from Hollywood to New York, to confer with Harry Eckman, head of Sky-Hi, sailing at three to-morrow. Trans-continental race to beat liner's departure. Notify news reel and newspaper camera men to be at the flying field for the hop-off in an hour. Send pictures by telephoto to all cities along the route. Get stories to all press associations.

Then Kendall telephoned a flying field to have that crate ready in an hour. This message referred to a new type of plane which the makers were

ready to introduce with all the publicity they could get.

Kendall had offered the airplane company's press agent a big publicity smash in return for transportation, which he had anticipated needing.

Plane and pilot were waiting when Kendall and King climbed into the cabin. News cameras registered their start, or rather King's start. Kendall hid his identity with goggles and helmet, a modest violet. They took off.

"Hawks made it in under nineteen hours. You can do as well or better," Kendall encouraged the pilot. "Step on it."

There was no rest for Kendall. His portable typewriter clicked sporadically as he wrote "Joe King's Own Story of His Flight." Installments of this, addressed to newspapers, were dropped at important cities by means of small package-delivery parachutes, recently perfected. These had been furnished by another press-agent friend, who wanted a good story to publicize them.

In his first installment, King sympathized with movie stars barred from flying by contracts drawn by cautious producers. Such a ban was in the contract of Hap Day, who was wildly seeking a plane between Chicago and New York when he read this reminder in a newspaper. So Mr. Day stuck to a train.

Across the land swept Kendall and King. Like a shadow beneath them, swept their coast-to-coast publicity. They flew through a night into a sun-

rise, hurdling Rockies, Mississippi and Alleghenies. Then——

"Something's hitting wrong!" reported the pilot. He waved toward earth. "We'd better land while we can."

"Keep on," ordered Kendall. "If it's on the books for us to crash, we'll crash. Think of the publicity that would get us."

So they flew on, flashed over New York, and swooped down on Long Island at one o'clock, after nineteen hours of flight. Two hours before sailing time!

They tore away from photographers and reporters after brief poses, and rushed by motor to a train. It bore them cityward, making a maddening halt in a river tunnel. Then that delay ended. They detrained and raced by taxi through Manhattan to the steamship pier. On shipboard they reached Eckman, just before sailing time.

Eckman was shrewd in showmanship. He knew that this thrilling transcontinental air race meant big publicity for the actor who had made it. And Sky-Hi Film could share it. Perhaps a big picture could be built around it. He liked King's laugh.

"I think we can get together," Eckman hesitated. "I'll radio Winn my decision to-night at sea."

"Delays are dangerous," urged Dave Kendall, pulling out a contract ready for signature. "You can radio from here. Do it now."

Great are slogans! Eckman did it.

How'd you like this story? Want more about Dave Kendall, the Hollywood publicity man, who makes movie stars? Write to the editors and say

"Yes" or "No."





Brains

by T.T.Flynn

COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

CHAPTER I.

BIG BUSINESS.



YOU'VE never met me before. Mort Magruder—feature writer in the business and financial section of the *Tribune*. Howdy.

That—meaning my job—is why I happened to pay so much attention to “Lucky John” O’Leary and the other men who eased so unobtrusively into one of the private dining rooms at the back of the Clarendon Restaurant.

I called De Armond’s attention to it.

He smiled across at me, and blinked behind the thick lenses of the shell-rimmed glasses, which went far toward disguising the fact that he was one of the smartest men on the detective force.

“I don’t see,” he told me mildly, “that it’s anything to get excited about.”

De Armond and I were lunching

over near the side of the room, practically hidden behind a potted palm. From that position I saw the thin ascetic form of Peter Fleming, president of the Fourth National Bank, following the head waiter to the back of the room.

His bloodless lips were pressed tightly together, and his long, pointed nose was thrust out ahead of his bony chin as if he was following down a warm, sweet trail of some kind. And, to Peter Fleming, a warm, sweet trail could lead only to a juicy business proposition.

There was nothing in Fleming’s appearance to get excited about. I didn’t. Nor did I when Edwin Marrow, president of the South End Savings and Trust Co., took his tall dryish figure and mutton-chop whiskers back into the same room.

But—when Lucky John O’Leary

breezed in right after them, I sat up and took notice.

There was a reason. O'Leary no more belonged with those two conservative pillars of finance than I did in the old ladies' home. Not even on a friendship basis. They had no basis on which to be friends.

Lucky John O'Leary had been a druggist when prohibition came over the land. When the price of bottled goods started on the upward climb, he got some prescription pads, plenty of cased stock, and started on an upward climb himself.

He didn't stop until he was the city's biggest bootlegger, quite a toodleoo with the city-hall boys, and simply filthy with money—good money, too. Better than the cut-and-washed liquor he was sponsoring. In the last few years he had been branching out into other lines that promised a profit.

I had heard a tale or two about blackmail—rumors only—and there was the matter of the pavement contract that had been so sour that even the mayor had to disown it.

Everything that Lucky John O'Leary went into showed a profit. He was a hard, ruthless chap who smashed his way through all obstacles, and always won out.

I shook my head at De Armond, when he told me there was nothing to get excited about.

"You may be right," I admitted dryly. "But will you please explain what you've just seen?"

"Why bother?"

"Is it reasonable?"

De Armond smiled again. "Of course not. But I wouldn't interrupt lunch to worry about it."

I did. 'Couldn't help it. And when, not three minutes later, Sam Abbot, of Abbot & Co., department store, fat and genial, sharp and greedy disappeared through that same door like a homing pigeon, I lost my appetite.

Right behind Sam Abbot came Aaron Bradshaw, chain groceries. He was another shark on cornering the elusive dollars. Respectable, too. Very! Pillar of his church. Contributor to the dry cause.

I leaned forward and spoke from the heart. "Did you see that?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well," said De Armond. "Well, well, well."

And right behind his words appeared Louis Meyer, little and dried, silent and dour, smart and rich.

"Something should be done about this," I said feverishly.

"What?" asked De Armond, a trifle sarcastically.

He didn't have a few columns that had to be filled over and over with new facts about this, that, and the other angle of the business world.

"I wish I knew what," I confessed.

While I was still wishing, along came the six feet two of Jack Rutherford who had inherited his money and his brains, and who had added to each with the passing years. A fine man, Jack Rutherford. Not in the same class with Lucky John O'Leary.

"That finishes it," I declared, pushing back my chair. "I'm going to mix in this if I lose an ear."

"Don't do anything rash," De Armond advised good-naturedly. "Remember the sanctity of privacy."

"Razzberries! Wait here at the table for me."

Carl, the head waiter, was a lodge brother of mine. In addition, I had once given him a hot tip on a good stock. He had banked six thousand on it, and assured me that the world was mine as soon as he got it to give.

"Carl," I said, bearing down on him, "greetings."

"Ah," said Carl giving me the grip. "How are you to-day? I didn't see you come in. Is your lunch all right?"

"Perfectly scrumptious," I assured him. "Do you see that dining-room door, Carl? The second one from the end?"

Carl gave me a startled look, and then glanced at the door as if he had never laid eyes on it before. He was the essence of innocence.

"Yes," he said. "I see the door. Nice wood isn't it? Have you tried the luncheon dessert yet? It's said to be particularly fine. The new chef is a wizard. He came from——"

"Quite so," I told Carl gently but firmly. "But about that door——"

"Oh, yes," said Carl—and if his voice was not shaded with uneasiness then I was due for an ear trumpet.

"Who is in the room on the left of it?"

"That room," Carl told me promptly, "is reserved."

"And the room on the right?"

"Reserved also." Carl's eye roved about the room, landed on an imaginary patron—and he nodded. "Pardon me," he murmured. "I am wanted. I'll be seeing you a little later."

I grasped his arm firmly. "You'll be seeing me right now, my boy. And you'll keep on seeing me until this matter is settled. If the room on the left is reserved, it's empty now. I desire to spend a few minutes in there."

"It is not possible," Carl said hastily.

By the way he said it, I knew that he had been tipped liberally to make it not possible. And, because of that, it had to be possible.

"Carl," I said feelingly. "I wouldn't want you to do a thing you shouldn't do. As a lodge brother and a friend I'd shrink from that like I would from a pint of wood alcohol."

"I'm sure of it," Carl said with unmistakable relief. "I knew you wouldn't."

"And so," I continued gently, "all I'm asking you to do is slip me in that left-hand room, and forget about the

matter like a good fellow and, er, a lodge brother."

Carl shook his head desperately. "I can't. I simply can't. It's not——"

"Just between lodge brothers. A help to one who needs it. I'll appreciate it like—like you did that stock tip that you cleaned up on. And I'll be willing to do as much for you as you were going to do for me."

Carl thrust a hand into his pocket. "I can't possibly let you in that room," he said with a sigh. "The door is locked and I've given my word. Please forget about it."

His hand came out of the pocket. There was a little tinkle on the floor. Carl removed his elbow firmly and went his way to the far corner, where his back was to the door in question.

On the floor at my feet lay a key.

CHAPTER II.

TALK TURKEY!

THE room was empty, as Carl had said. I closed the door easily, and then locked it for good measure. A few silent steps took me over to the right-hand wall. I sat on the cushioned seat that was there. I'm tall. My head was up in the air, near the rather low ceiling.

There in the corner, as I already knew, a steam pipe went through the partition between the two rooms. It did not quite fill the hole that had been cut for it. I got my ear as close to that hole as possible and listened breathlessly.

It might not have been ethical. Wasn't, of course. But tell that to the boys who read the papers—not the ones who get 'em out. What I heard was plenty of balm to a wounded conscience.

Sam Abbot was saying, "I wish we'd order lunch and eat it while we're talking. I almost starved to death yesterday before the food came."

"Food after business, always," Peter Fleming declared in what seemed to be an attempt at dry humor.

The husky voice of Lucky John O'Leary followed. "I think Mr. Abbot's got the right idea. Suppose we have the food in. Then we'll get down to brass tacks."

"I agree," Aaron Bradshaw said.

Standing there on my tiptoes, I visualized them all, seated about the table, eying one another closely, sparring a little before getting down to business. And what was their business?"

The door opened. Carl's voice sounded. Orders were given briefly. Carl went out.

Matches scratched. Smell of tobacco smoke came faintly through my little oversized pipe opening. Conversation was desultory. Nothing of much interest was touched on.

In a little while the lunch came in: Quick service. Carl's palm must have been well greased. Dishes rattled and clinked. There was almost no talk for a few minutes as they ate. Then:

"I've been working more on the proposition since we talked it all over yesterday," the husky voice of Lucky John O'Leary stated. "It's a pretty sure thing right now."

Louis Meyer broke in sharply. "Before you say anything more, are you sure there is no one in the rooms on either side? This is not talk that should be heard. Have you looked?"

"I gave the head waiter half a century note," Lucky John O'Leary said huskily. "There ain't no one in them rooms. He'd keep the boss out for half that much."

"Just the same I see for myself." A chair scraped back. The door of the other room opened and closed just as I got down to the floor.

I consigned that dour little dried-up Louis Meyer to the devil—and at the same time took off my hat to him for showing so much sense.

The doorknob rattled. I certainly thanked the hunch that had made me lock the door after I came in.

A moment later the other door opened and closed again. I went back to my post with a silent sigh of relief.

"I tried them both. They are locked. I guess it is all right," said Meyer.

"Sure it is," Lucky John O'Leary husked heartily. "I don't let things go wrong when I'm connected with them."

"I guess we've all been doing a little work on the proposition," Sam Abbot chuckled. "How about it, gentlemen?"

"Presumably so," Peter Fleming declared precisely. "It is a matter that requires thought. A great deal of it."

"Well," said O'Leary, "there ain't any use in worrying about it. You talk turkey with me and I'll make you all richer than you ever dreamed about."

"I had some pretty big dreams last night," Sam Abbot chuckled. "If you can match them, you'll be a wonder."

The husky voice of Lucky John said confidently, "I can. I ain't no bluff. You men can figure as well as I can. You own among you about seven hundred acres out there on the north side. You've been holding it for building lots, hoping to get about thirty-five hundred an acre. That'll bring you less than two million and a half."

"I tell you to turn the whole tract into a cemetery and get four dollars a square foot for it. Forty thousand square feet to an acre. Add it up. A hundred and sixty thousand an acre. That brings you a hundred and twelve million cold bucks. Say a hundred million, after the land for roads and walks is taken out. Did you ever hear of a graft like it?"

There was a dry cough. Edwin Marrow, the old-school banker with the mutton-chop whiskers, said in his dry manner: "It does sound remarkable. Fantastic, I should say."

Louis Meyer said with a touch of awe in his voice, "*A hundred million dollars.*"

For my own part I almost fell off the seat as I heard Lucky John sketch the proposition. A hundred million dollars. He was getting into high finance with a vengeance.

I knew the land they were speaking about. For some years it had been held for investment. Most of it was bare of dwellings. Some was in woods, some in bare lots.

Two arms of the city had thrust out on each side, houses had been built almost around the tract, but the owners held stubbornly while values went up. Now instead of building lots the owners were offered the bait of a cemetery.

I listened breathlessly, picturing the splash this bit of news would make when it was published to our fair city.

Peter Fleming spoke cautiously: "That all sounds very well. Ahem, very well indeed. But there is the other matter that you touched on yesterday. The land as it stands has not a chance of being turned into a cemetery.

"Every home owner within a mile would raise the, ahem, devil, if I may use the word. And I am not too sure myself that there is a way past the difficulty."

I could see them clearly in my mind's eye as they sat around that table in the other room, mentally savoring this juicy titbit of finance that was tossed before them. No wonder old Peter Fleming's long nose had been thrust forward as if he were on a warm trail. No wonder the others had been glad to slip in and join the company that included Lucky John O'Leary.

No wonder that Carl had been tipped liberally to see that the rooms on each side were kept empty.

Lucky John cut short my thoughts. His voice was sharp as he spoke. "Sure there's a way past it. What do you suppose I'm bothering with it for? D'you think I planned all this, and got you together, and told you all about it, for my health?"

"We know you better than that?" Sam Abbot chuckled.

"You ought to. I don't touch a thing unless there's plenty of jack in it for me. I looked into all this before I peeped a word.

"There ain't a chance of you fellows getting a permit to turn your land into a cemetery. Not a thin chance. But if you talk business with me, I'll see that a permit is issued."

"You mean there must be bribery?" Edwin Marrow asked in sanctimonious tones.

"I ain't said."

"I couldn't consider that. I couldn't. If, er, it got out, the scandal would be too much. I have always, I trust, done business in a dignified manner. All of us have, I am sure."

"Sure," agreed Lucky John, and there was the suspicion of a sneer in his voice. "I never said anything about bribery. I ain't going to. This is business. Big business.

"You can't sneeze at a hundred million iron men. I got influence at the city hall. You men slip me a half million in cash and I'll see that a permit is issued. There won't be any bribery about it at all.

"'Friendship' is the word. Pure friendship. I done every man down there a good favor at one time or another, and they come through for me when I ask it."

A little silence followed his words. Again I could see them rolling the idea around in their minds, pondering over it as they doubtless had pondered all the night before. A half million in cash to win a hundred million.

They had the money. Were they going to risk it on the word of Lucky John O'Leary, super-bootlegger, dealer along the shady fringes of business? The bait was powerful.

Aaron Bradshaw gave his opinion slowly. "If there will be no bribery, I think we would do well to go into this.

A hundred million dollars is quite a nice sum."

"I'm with you," Sam Abbot chimed in quickly.

And one after another they committed themselves—until all but Jack Rutherford had spoken. There was another moment of silence as they all, doubtless, looked at him for his answer.

CHAPTER III.

THIS IS NEWS.

A CHAIR scraping sounded loud in that dead silence.

Rutherford's deep voice came abruptly. "I've been sitting here in silence in order to see just what fools you men could be. You are bigger ones than I thought. Now I'll give you my opinion.

"This man here is simply trying to pull half a million dollars out of our pockets on a fairy tale—a pipe dream, to use his own brand of speech. There isn't a chance of him getting a permit for a cemetery.

"I knew that yesterday, but didn't say so because I thought you men would realize it after you had slept over the matter. Instead, you let the talk about a hundred million put you to sleep."

"By damn!" Lucky John snapped angrily. "I'll not sit here and listen to you talk about me like that! What do you know about the chances I have of getting the permit? You're yellow! That's what's the matter with you! Yellow! Afraid of your money. Afraid that something will go a little wrong!"

"Sit down, Mr. O'Leary," Sam Abbot begged hastily. "Don't speak so loud. Rutherford probably hasn't thought out all the angles of the matter. We'll talk it over. Sit down and unclench your fist like a reasonable man. We can't have any trouble in here."

"Never mind about trouble! He

can't stand there and talk about me like that!"

"I had seen O'Leary in action before. His husky voice had a menacing timbre. His blue-black jowls and flattened nose set off his angry scowl to such effect that most men stopped to think, and in the end usually came around to agree with his driving, domineering personality.

"I'll stand here and say anything I please about you," Jack Rutherford told him coldly, and not in the least nervously.

I could well sense their apprehension. A public row would get into the papers, bring them all into the spotlight. And it wouldn't do any of them any good to have their names connected with Lucky John O'Leary.

But, suddenly, it was O'Leary himself who backed down, seeing, I suppose, that he stood no chance of bluffing Rutherford.

"Suppose we sit down and finish this lunch and talk it all over reasonably," O'Leary said. "There ain't any sense in getting all stirred up about it. Business is business. We'll try to get together, and if we can't, there's no harm done."

He sat down.

Rutherford followed him, but declared firmly, "My mind is made up. There is no chance of changing it. I'll finish the lunch because I hope to make the rest of you see what a mess you're heading into."

I could have told them myself. There wasn't a chance of getting that permit. The administration simply wouldn't dare—not even for a hundred million. They'd have a hornet's nest about their ears before a man could sneeze. And when Mr. Voter really gets stirred up, he's a bad man to deal with.

Minutes passed while I stood there keeping tab on the talk. The argument ran around the table, every last man there trying to convince Jack Rutherford

ford that he was mistaken. All they could see was the hundred million dollars.

Rutherford refused to be convinced.

O'LEARY finally took over the task of pacifying him. The man's voice was mild, persuasive, in marked contrast to his recent belligerent manner. Once or twice he managed to inject a joke, at which he chuckled audibly, and in which he was joined by the others.

"Now listen," Jack Rutherford finally told him firmly, "my mind is made up. You might as—"

Rutherford's voice broke off. A moment later he asked sharply: "Who turned the light off?"

"No one," Sam Abbot replied. "It's still burning. Are you trying to be funny?"

"No! I can't *see*! My head is *splitting*!" Rutherford's voice trailed off. He groaned.

There was a scraping of chairs.

O'Leary spoke sharply. "It looks like his heart has gone back on him! Here, let's lay him on the floor!"

The confused sounds that followed indicated that they were carrying out that course.

I stepped hurriedly to my door and unlocked it. But, once outside, I hesitated. To knock on their door and admit knowledge of the trouble would show that I had been listening. Not so good.

Supposedly wise, cool heads were in there. They could attend to the matter.

While I debated, the door suddenly opened. Lucky John O'Leary stepped out. He saw me a few feet away. His eyes narrowed. He asked shortly: "What are you doing here?"

"Waiting for a friend," I told him. "You look queer. Anything wrong?"

"No," he denied shortly, and started toward the front of the room with hurried steps.

I fell in beside him, asking: "Know any news?"

He snapped, "Too busy to talk! See you some other time!"

"I'll walk along with you and we can talk on the way," I said, lengthening my stride.

O'Leary glared—and then shrugged slightly. Out of the corner of his mouth, a habit he had acquired since leaving the prescription counter, he husked: "This is *news*. You might as well get it before the rest of the reporters. Rutherford has been seized with a heart attack. He's back there in the dining room, dying or dead. I'm after a doctor."

We were up at the front then, where the cashier's desk, the check girl, and the entrance were located. "There's a phone on the cashier's desk," I suggested.

"Where's the nearest doctor?" O'Leary snapped to the girl at the desk.

She shook her head, answered indifferently, "Don't know, mister. There's the telephone book hanging under the phone."

O'Leary leaved through it quickly. Long seconds passed while he scanned the list of doctors in the back. He found what he sought and barked a number into the instrument. The doctor was out. He muttered an oath and started to call another.

"The ambulance, man—the ambulance," I reminded. "It will be here in a few minutes."

My interruption caused him to scowl, but he made the call. When he hung up, the cashier asked wide-eyed:

"What's wrong, mister? Somebody sick?"

"Yes," he told her curtly, slipping a stick of chewing gum into his mouth, crumpling the wrapper and tossing it in a partly filled waste basket at the corner of her desk. Then, without taking more notice of either of us, he

strode back toward the private dining room.

I followed.

De Armond, whom I had almost forgotten in the drama and excitement, intercepted me. "What's the matter?" he asked. "Why follow O'Leary all over the place?"

In as few words as possible I told him what had happened to Jack Rutherford, and the gist of the conversation that I had heard immediately before.

De Armond snapped into alertness at mention of bribery. When I finished, he remarked with a trace of admiration in his voice: "O'Leary is a smart chap. It's brains, not luck, that helps him."

I pointed out a trifle sarcastically: "His brains weren't doing him much good at the last. Rutherford was making them all see that it was a pipe dream. Then a lucky break came along and put Rutherford out of the way."

De Armond took off his shell-rimmed glasses and polished them slowly with the end of a snowy handkerchief. His eyes were bright with interest. "I think," he remarked briskly, "that we had better join them. I'm full of curiosity myself now."

CHAPTER IV.

UNWELCOME.

PETER FLEMING opened the door in answer to my knock. He frowned at sight of us, and asked testily: "What do you want?"

De Armond slipped back a coat lapel, showing a small badge, and answered coolly: "I'm from headquarters."

Fleming seemed about to bar the way, but on second thought allowed us to enter. He seemed none too sure of his ground, and looked harassed, as if thinking of the publicity that was awaiting all of them.

Rutherford lay still and inert on a cushioned seat that ran along the right

wall. His face was sallow but peaceful. One look was enough to show that no ambulance would do him any good.

Some one knocked almost as soon as the door closed behind us. Fleming opened it again. Carl stood there.

"The cashier told me something was wrong in here," he said anxiously. Then he saw Rutherford, and gulped.

"A case of heart failure," Peter Fleming declared grimly. "The ambulance is coming. You can do nothing."

He shut the door in Carl's face.

O'Leary knew De Armond. He asked in his husky voice "What do you two fellows want in here?"

"Looking around," De Armond replied as he went to the body. "Any objections against it?"

"Help yourself. But this ain't your line. We need a doctor, not a dick."

De Armond looked the body over thoughtfully, and finally pushed back the eyelids.

O'Leary sneered in his husky voice: "I wonder if he knows what he is doing."

Sam Abbot, not his jolly self now, sighed. "What does it matter? Rutherford is dead—I'm all broken up about this. Just think—he's on the way to the cemetery now, only a few minutes after—after—" He broke off.

"After what?" De Armond asked, straightening up and looking at him.

"None of your business," Sam Abbot answered promptly.

Every man in the room regarded us with disfavor.

"That other person is on the *Tribune* staff!" Aaron Bradshaw remarked suddenly, indicating me.

I acknowledged it, and asked: "Have any of you gentlemen a statement to make?"

"Yes! The sooner you get out of here the better!" Louis Meyer snapped.

De Armond told them absently, "He's with me." He was taking in every detail of the table.

"Where did Rutherford sit?" he asked a moment later.

O'Leary, standing on the other side, placed his hand on the chair directly before him. "Here."

"And the others?"

"Fleming sat on his left," O'Leary went on with an ironical note in his voice. "Meyer was at the end of the table with his back to the door. Bradshaw up at the other end of the table. I sat across from Rutherford where you are now standing. On my right was Marrow. Then Abbot. Anything else you would like to know?"

De Armond looked at the litter of dishes on the table. His face was blank. He was more like a college professor than a headquarters' man. As a matter of fact he had been a college professor at one time.

An inheritance had left him free to get what he wanted out of life. He had found happiness in the clash of brains with crime. But now, looking down at the table, he seemed without an idea in the world.

On Rutherford's plate, there were some scraps of meat, potatoes, and gravy. Also half a bun with a bite taken out of it, part of a salad, a little pot of orange marmalade, and a cup containing some black coffee in the bottom.

"What was Rutherford eating when the attack came on?" De Armond queried.

Louis Meyer answered sourly: "Nothing. He drank a little coffee just before. I remember that. But he had not eaten anything for some time. He was talking."

"About what?"

"That is no business of yours," Meyer answered just as quickly as Abbot had.

Unruffled, De Armond told him, "It's quite my business. I have reason to believe that Rutherford died from something besides heart trouble."

A dropped pin could have been heard in the silence that followed his words. I myself was as astonished as any.

Edwin Marrow burst out: "What did he die of then?"

"Perhaps poison."

Peter Fleming paled slightly. "Poison!" he uttered in a shrill voice. "What nonsense! Another statement like that and we'll know you aren't fit to be on the detective force!"

"What grounds have you for saying poison?" Louis Meyer demanded with some heat. "We were lunching and talking business. Rutherford's heart went bad when he got excited. He has had heart trouble for years. Every one knows it. Now you come in and say poison. Are you a doctor?"

Lucky John O'Leary sneered: "Bunk! He don't know any more about it than I do. He's making a play to get his name in the papers. I've seen his kind before. We ought to throw him out. He'll be accusing one of us next."

"Throw me out," De Armond invited with a slight smile, as he leaned over the table and began to gather up the dishes that Rutherford had eaten from.

"Like to have me make a move so you can bring a charge against me, wouldn't you?" O'Leary scoffed in his husky voice. "Well, I'm wise to you. And if you're wise, you'll take a tip and stop bothering us. I'm going to drop a word where it'll do the most good. It's about time you were canned off the force."

De Armond was not disturbed. He carried the dishes over to the small service table that stood at one side of the door, and drew the tablecloth up over them.

He had barely finished that when steps sounded outside. The door opened. A young, white-coated interne entered, while outside two helpers waited with a folded stretcher. Over

their shoulders I saw the surprised and curious patrons of the place, staring.

"Doctor, I want to talk to you a moment," De Armond said quickly, showing his badge.

He led the doctor outside and spoke to him in a low voice.

The man came back in looking serious. He examined the body closely. Finally he nodded and said, "Yes," to De Armond, who was standing beside him.

Peter Fleming addressed the medical man pompously. "Doctor, this detective claims that Rutherford was poisoned. Will you stamp it as a lie so that we can deal with him?"

"Unfortunately, it seems to be the truth as far as I can find out from a superficial examination," the interne replied coolly. "You will have to deal with the gentleman on that basis."

Peter Fleming reddened. "Rutherford was p-poisoned?" he stammered. "It seems so."

In the outburst of protest and argument that the information evoked, the body was placed on the stretcher and taken away. The doctor followed with the dishes and food that remained at Rutherford's place. He had given little satisfaction to any of the questions.

"Tests will settle the matter beyond doubt," the doctor had told them, and left it at that.

CHAPTER V.

LUCK!

DE ARMOND addressed them briskly as soon as the door closed behind the doctor.

"I'll detain you all. If Rutherford was poisoned, it lies between you and the restaurant. I'll work on you first. If any one of you brought poison in, the container is on his person or about the room. Will you submit to search, or make me force the issue?"

They were as indignant a lot of men

as I have ever seen. Rich, used to giving orders and imposing their wills on other people, it came hard to have this detective ordering them around and telling them what they could and could not do.

Lucky John O'Leary was the only one who was used to this side of the law. He submitted with sardonic humor as soon as he saw that De Armond really meant business.

"You take the prize for dumb dicks," O'Leary commented. "Have your fun now. We'll laugh later. You're bone-heading yourself right out of a job."

"Indeed he is!" Peter Fleming bit off. "I'm going to take this matter up with the mayor and my lawyers at once. If there is any redress, I'll see that we have it."

De Armond was bombarded with that sort of talk as he searched them one after another. He did a good job, too.

One after another, they submitted with ill grace. They told De Armond at length what they were going to do about the matter.

Peter Fleming—Lucky John O'Leary—Louis Meyer—Edwin Marrow—

Not a suspicious thing was found on any of them. De Armond began to get worried. Only I, who had known him a long time, read the fact from the tight way his lips pressed together.

Sam Abbot—Aaron Bradshaw—

De Armond had shot his bolt and found nothing. Every man there had been searched thoroughly, without success.

"Well," O'Leary sneered, "now what have you got to say?"

"I wish you men would sit down in your chairs while I look the room over," De Armond requested.

"I'll not stand for any more of this!" Peter Fleming snarled angrily. "This foolishness has gone far enough!"

O'Leary's husky voice filled the room. "The quickest way to get it over

with is to let him have his way. Sit down men. Let him search the room. After he's through with the whole business we'll have him."

That angle seemed to appeal to them. They had been submitting without due process of law to De Armond's demands, moved more than anything, it seemed to me, by fear that he might stir up the mess, and make it more public than it was. Now they submitted grimly, waiting for him to get in deeper.

I began to feel sorry for De Armond as his search of the room proceeded fruitlessly. Lucky John O'Leary watched with a grin, as a cat might eye a mouse. He would be in the van of the attack on De Armond.

De Armond finally finished, completely baffled. He could not keep it off of his face as he stood silently, looking about the room.

"All through?" O'Leary asked. There was an ugly note in his voice.

De Armond stood there a few moments more, wrapped in his thoughts. They were not, I surmised, very pleasant. Then, abruptly, he said: "I'm going out for a minute or so. Please stay in here until I return. Magruder will keep an eye on you."

De Armond went out at once, before further indignation could break forth.

O'LEARY eyed me unpleasantly. "A fine pair of saps you two are," he sneered.

I did not answer. What was the use? De Armond would not be helped.

Four long minutes—it may have been five—went slowly by while I stood my ground and listened to the blistering comments that were freely aired by the seated men. Then—the door opened and De Armond returned.

There was a key on the inside of the door. He turned it, locking us all in.

"Well, sir!" said Peter Fleming challengingly. "Are you through with this farce?"

"Almost," De Armond told him quietly—and smiled.

"Funny is it?" O'Leary husked. "You'll soon be laughing out of the other side of your mouth."

As if he had not heard the man, De Armond started to speak. And there was something about his manner and the tone of his voice that held them silent and interested.

"It has been my observation," said De Armond, "that a man may be lucky once, or twice, or even three times. But when, in business, he seemed consistently lucky, it is almost always brains. You men are business men. You know it. The lucky boys always stumble sooner or later, and show themselves in their true colors."

One or two involuntary nods attested the truth of the statement.

"Now then," went on De Armond coolly, "when I see a man whom I rate as rather brainy, stumble on a rare bit of good luck, I always look closer to make certain whether it was really luck, or another instance of the use of his brains. Almost always it is more brains than luck."

Peter Fleming blurted, "What is the idea of this lecture that you are giving us?"

"I was leading up to a point, Mr. Fleming. The point that Jack Rutherford's death was most opportune for some one. So much so that I asked myself right away whether it was luck for the man, or his brains working again."

"What do you mean?" the banker glared.

"I mean what I said. I know the plan you men were discussing here, and that you had discussed at lunch yesterday. Now, wasn't it possible that a man might foresee yesterday that perhaps it would be necessary to get an-

other out of the way, and come prepared? It was. And a man did get out of the way.

"I was professor of chemistry for some years. I have made a study of poisons for the work I am now engaged in. I came into this room looking for something wrong—and I found it in Rutherford.

"He might have died from heart failure. There is little doubt that a doctor, knowing Rutherford had been suffering from that malady for years, and giving a hasty examination only, would have signed a death certificate for heart trouble.

"The doctor would have passed over the icy skin that Rutherford had a few moments after death, the loss of sight, the headache he spoke of, and the widely dilated pupils of the eyes.

"I didn't pass over them. Nor did the ambulance doctor when I called them to his attention."

Peter Fleming's sharp old face was pale as a sheet. "What do you know about the happenings in this room before you entered?" he faltered.

"Everything."

That silenced the banker, and gave them all something to think about. And, in that silence, De Armond calmly went on to the end.

"I found nothing in this room, so I looked farther—and found what I was after." He brought his left hand out of the coat pocket where it had been thrust, and laid a folded handkerchief in the palm of his right hand, and opened it carefully.

In the center of the handkerchief was a small crumpled bit of paper. Inside that a tiny tube of colored glass. It had been broken in half.

"Rutherford evidently died from

atropine," said De Armond composedly. "An infinitesimal amount causes death. The white powder is supposed to be kept inside colored glass. It is odorless and bitter tasting, but would probably be taken in bitter orange marmalade without undue notice.

"Tests will show what food Rutherford got it in. And—the finger print on this paper will show who the man was that administered it." He indicated the paper in the handkerchief.

"Where did you get that?" Peter Fleming asked with an effort, pointing to it.

"Don't be so fearful of your spotless reputation," De Armond told him with a slight smile. "This chewing gum wrapper, and the glass that had been slipped inside of it, came from this waste-paper basket where O'Leary tossed it, right under Magruder's eyes."

O'Leary had been sitting silent and wary. Now his chair crashed back as he leaped toward De Armond.

With two swift movements, De Armond pocketed the handkerchief and flashed an automatic.

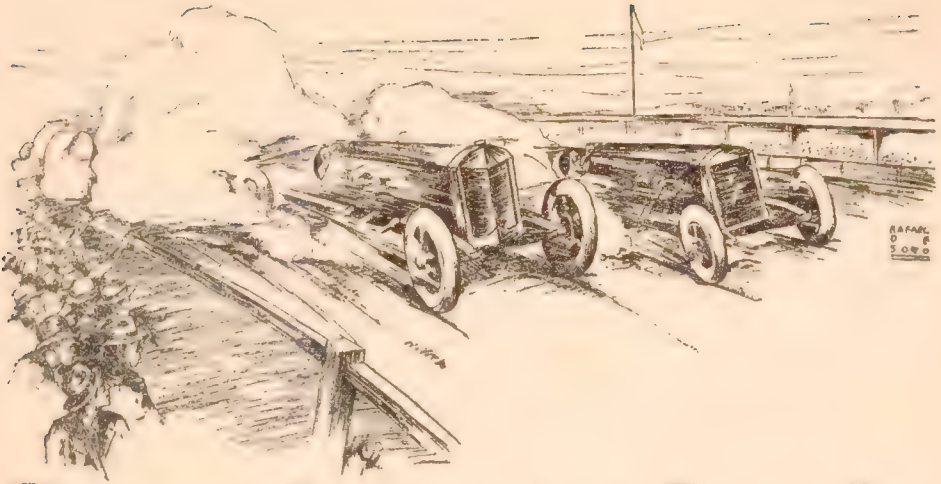
O'Leary stopped before the cold menace of the blue-steel barrel—stopped and glared, lips drawing away from his teeth. In that moment the blustering bootlegger and crooked business man looked like a cornered rat.

As the man's erstwhile business associates looked on in amazement, De Armond said through his teeth: "You had the brains and the druggist's knowledge, O'Leary—but, as I said, no luck. Put your wrists out while Magruder slips my cuffs on them."

And, with something like a sigh, Lucky John O'Leary did.

"Luck!" he muttered bitterly. "Hell!"

A story of secret-service spies, during the World War, will appear in our next issue. "Under the Black Eagle," by Lieutenant S. G. Pond, is a thrilling story of action in the air and behind enemy lines, and is complete in the next number.



Speedman's Luck

by Barry Lyndon

Part I

CHAPTER I.

A BRAKE TESTER.

BRAKE shoes squealed wildly against their drums, and the short tail of the racing car swung into a slashing skid as Jim Ryan wrenched at the spring-spoked steering wheel.

For three yards the machine slithered broadside, then checked. Gray dust lifted like smoke around the black tires, as Jim peered over the edge of the rounded scuttle at the girl who had been saved only by his instinctive action.

She stood, now, with her back pressed against the rough, stone wall which bordered one side of the narrow French lane, her eyes wide and a little scared.

"I'm—I'm sorry!" she gasped. Jim heard her voice clearly because, in the sudden stop, he had stalled his roaring motor. He grinned as he heaved himself out of the narrow cockpit and dropped to the road.

She went on: "I—I heard you coming, but I didn't think you were so near!"

"That's all right—good test for the brakes," and in one swift glance Jim surveyed her. He could tell from her intonation that she was an American girl. It was the pleasant lilt in her voice which made him regard her so sharply.

Still pressed tensely against the wall, she looked at the car which, in a very little while, would be roaring round the Givror's circuit in the French Grand Prix. She saw a very low-built machine, with a svelte body which seemed to crouch between the splayed wheels.

The car was placed half across the road from its sudden skid. She marked the strength of the finned brake drums, the grim ugliness of the staggered radiator, and the steely power of the steering gear.

Everything about the car was strong and trim and purposeful. The speed-born sweep of the stream-lined body

lent it a fierceness which was enhanced by the squat bulk of the oil tank below the radiator stone guard—jutting like the underjaw of a bulldog.

From the machine, she looked to its driver. He was lean of face and in his eyes was a steely clearness, a wind-washed gray. As he climbed from the cockpit he moved with an odd stiffness. Where the sleeves of his white overalls were drawn up a little on his forearms she saw layer on layer of linene bandage, tightly wound.

She did not know that he was the only speedman driving in the world's greatest road race that day who wore such bandages.

They swathed Jim Ryan's forearms, legs and thighs; designed to support weary flesh and muscle where it had been flailed and racked to weakness under the furious stress of the hurtling, leaping car.

A driver wears them only when he expects his machine to try him beyond the normal limit of human endurance.

Jim Ryan had been taking his machine down to the replenishment pits ready for the start of the race, due in little more than an hour. The girl had dived across the narrow lane from an opening in the wall, leaping back in the moment that he had braked and skidded to avoid her.

He thrust against the leather-bound edge of the cockpit, dragging on the steering wheel to run the car straight. The girl jumped to aid him. As the machine ran level on the narrow way, he turned to her.

"D'you think you could push on the tail and give me a start?" he asked, and when he smiled he disclosed strong, white teeth. "You see, she's got pretty high compression, and I can't swing the engine with the starting handle. I've got three or four mechanics following on a lorry, but they won't be along for a bit and there doesn't seem to be anybody else about."

"I'll do anything at all to help, if you'll tell me what you want," she said quickly. "It's my fault you stopped your motor—I'd have been hurt if you hadn't pulled up so quickly!"

"I was going too fast for a lane like this. It's a bit of luck for me that you're American. If you'd been one of the natives I should have had to stop here, because I can't speak a word of French!"

She laughed. Jim noticed that her features were very small, and she dimpled a little when she smiled. Her hair was shingled and dark, and it clung closely to her temples.

"Is this a Sunbeam?" she asked. "I see it's a green car."

"All British machines are green—that's our international racing color. French are blue and the Italians red. Sunbeams aren't running, this is a Knight."

He climbed awkwardly into the cockpit, and slid down into the hard bucket seat. "Well, I'd better get along. If you'll just go to the off side of the tail and push, miss, you'll find she'll run easily."

She did as he bade and the long car rolled smoothly under her hands. Jim watched from the tail of his eye, and when the girl began to run, he snicked into gear and let in the clutch gently.

There was a moment of hesitation before the motor roared with a suddenness which made her jump back, while the machine surged forward down the lane.

She stood there with dust lifting about her. She saw him raise an arm and wave his thanks. She waved in reply. A moment later the car was sweeping out of sight around a bend in the lane.

"A Knight racer! That's queer!" she murmured, then turned and, crossing the lane, made her way to where the colorful bunting of the grand stands glowed, sunlit, at the side of the circuit.

CHAPTER II.

SPORTSMAN.

FROM the peaceful quietude of the dusty lane, Jim Ryan rolled his car to a broad road that was stiff with excited traffic. Sword-armed gendarmes and race marshals pounced on him the moment that he appeared and, magically, they made a way for the Knight.

Helmeted French soldiery, trim figures in horizon blue, guarded with fixed bayonets a barrier that was raised to allow him to pass onto the course. Spectators waved as he shot through. Flashing-eyed French girls blew him kisses. A *poilu* roared: "Bon chance!" through the boom of the Knight's exhaust as Jim stepped on the gas and swung the car to where the long line of replenishment pits showed opposite the grand stands.

The pits were wire inclosures, with spares and tools spread on a broad plank at the front. Racing machines stood at all angles before them, drivers and mechanics hustling in hectic, last-minute preparation.

Bunched flags drooped limply in many-hued patches against the shadows in the stands. Marshals scurried on the wide gray road. Two bands blared rival strains through the odd, twittering, vibrant roar that came from the assembled spectators.

Everywhere were faces, banked up in the duskiness of the long tribunes, or white in the sunshine of the inclosures. It seemed to Jim that every face in sight turned to look at him as he swept down the road.

His heart leaped as it always did when he got onto the course just before the start, and he had to get a grip on himself to check the tremors which waked somewhere in the pit of his stomach.

Blazing signs jutted above the pits, and Jim brought his machine to a stop by the green-and-white board which

marked the Knight depot. Two other Knight racers, forming a team of three, were already there. The instant Jim stopped, his mechanic jumped from the pit plank.

Jim's mechanic was a gray-haired man, his face lined and his eyes dark from sleeplessness. His brown boiler suit, borrowed months back from some French racing team and never returned, was stiff with oil and grime.

"Change plugs and tank up, Dan!" Jim called, as he switched off his motor. Slipping over the edge of the narrow cockpit to the road, he saw that Dan was white at the corners of the eyes and about the nostrils, while his hands shook as he snatched at the straps over the hood.

"What's the matter?" Jim stepped toward him.

"Oh, just shaky," came the answer. "Waiting for the start always gets me, and—and——" He broke off as Jim caught his arm.

"Dan, you look bad! D'you feel sick?" There was concern in Jim's tone, because he knew just how hard Dan had worked on their car.

The mechanic's hands dropped to his sides as he swung to face the young driver. He glanced at him for a moment; then came a sudden, low-voiced flood of words:

"The boss wants to speak to you, an' he's just been tellin' me that we've got to lick Hartz, or we'll go bust! He says he hopes I've got your bus in trim." Dan's lips trembled. He used the back of a hand to wipe the sweat off his furrowed brow, where his graying hair showed dank and wet.

"Gosh, Jim, I've worked day an' night on her with you, haven't I, boy? If she don't stick the race it won't be my fault will it? I've been workin' with no sleep for the last two nights, and I'm——"

"She's running fine!" Jim patted his shoulder reassuringly. "If I don't get

the winner's flag, it'll be my fault, not yours, Dan. Don't you worry!"

As Jim Ryan spoke he glimpsed a man leaping across the pit plank, making toward him. He was very thickset, with grizzled hair and wide, straight-looking eyes.

This was Bill Knight, the man who had designed and built Knight cars. He tucked a hand under Jim's arm and drew him out of earshot of those around.

"I saw Dennison last night," he said, without any preliminary. "He said that he's ready to put money into something, and he admitted that he's interested in the Hartz-Flyers. He gave me to understand that it's a choice between them and us. See what that means?"

Jim Ryan nodded slowly. He understood that all right. The Knight cars were sound machines, but they were not sound financially. For months Bill Knight had been trying to find some one who would put money into the firm and enable him to give his cars the chance they deserved.

He had been hoping for a good racing season, in order that they might carry on through the coming winter. Racing victories bring orders. In Europe, when a firm puts its machines into road races, it stands or falls by results.

Continuous failures, or bad racing luck, tell the world that its victorious rivals are better cars. The sales of the losers fall off.

Racing is enormously expensive. Twenty-five thousand dollars will sink very easily in building a speed machine, and four times that amount will fade readily in bringing a team of three cars to the line-up. That is a deadening drain on a struggling, one-man firm and, so far, the racing season had not been good for Bill Knight.

The Hartz-Flyer people were in a similar position, and they had tried to gain "Big Kerry" Dennison's interest at the same time as Knight.

Dennison was an American who had made money in steel. His steel was used in cars by the million in the States and now, just as a hobby, he wanted to buy an interest in the actual manufacture of automobiles.

Dennison had come to Europe because the American organizations were too vast for even him to gain a footing in them. In addition, many European firms raced their products, and Dennison liked cars which were hand-made, bred and tempered in the dust and heat of motor-racing circuits.

The hobby of the American financier meant life or death to the two small British firms. His money would make famous and profitable whichever machine he backed, and there was not a lot to choose between the performance of the Knights and the Hartz-Flyers.

Quite definitely, it seemed to Jim, this Big Kerry Dennison was a sportsman. He was saying that he would be ready to put the weight of his money behind the machine which proved itself the better car.

The machines were matched against one another in this French Grand Prix. They would fight again, in all probability, at the hazardous Monza Speedway, in Italy, and still again in the British Grand Prix on the Brooklands Track—the last of the big international races that year.

Dennison was matching them willingly to take up the winner. Reduced to broad terms like that, the issue was clear.

CHAPTER III.

TRICKY ANTAGONISM.

THAT'S fair enough," Jim commented quietly. "I won't let you down, Bill. It'll be just bad luck if I don't finish high up, and——"

"Make the pace from the start," Knight cut in. "Go off with a jump, get in front, and stop there! If the Bugattis and the Delages are too hot

for you, put your foot down for Scott, anyway—crack *him* up!

"He's fast, but I don't think his Hartz will stand a hard race. I'm telling our No. 2 to sit within sprinting distance of you, if he can, and No. 3 is going to ride to finish, whatever happens."

Knight's voice was strained and jerky. In a moment he went on: "Dennison is coming along before you go to the start—he'll be here any minute and I'll introduce you. See you later!"

He hurried away, and Jim turned to where Dan was under the hood, changing plugs deftly. He moved up to give him a hand, only to check as some one came from behind and touched his elbow.

Jim turned, and found himself gazing into the dark features of Scott, the Hartz-Flyer's star speedman. He was a spare fellow, with eyes that were sunken, and shrouded by bushy tufts of hair. His lips were thin, but there was about him a sinewy strength, and a subtle air of dashing recklessness.

"Ready for it?" Scott asked. He grinned as he added: "Look out for yourself on the corners, this race."

Jim's eyes narrowed a little. There were things a driver could do in a road race to balk another car. Scott knew them all and on the San Sebastian circuit a month earlier, he had used them against Jim.

"Don't try cutting me on the turns, this time, Scott," he said slowly. "I might be too far round to take the escape road, and then——"

"Then give me plenty of room when I'm passing, or I'll ride you off the course!" Scott grinned again as he uttered the low-voiced threat.

He didn't altogether mean what he said, and Jim knew it. But it was like Scott. He would always snatch a corner if he had the speed, or force a rival to the camber of the road, and keep him there, to make him slow. Invariably he

punished his car unmercifully and, through that, he had lost races which he might have won.

Scott moved on to his own pit, a little farther along, while Jim turned again to aid Dan. He snapped open the quick-release cap of the fuel tank. He had it brimming and had checked the water level in the radiator when Bill Knight appeared, with a man whom Jim recognized immediately as Big Kerry Dennison.

Dennison was six feet four of real muscle. He had a jaw like a block of granite, but his hands and feet were surprisingly small. His lips, too, were shapely, and his smile was friendly.

"This is Jim Ryan," introduced Knight, and the big man extended a bronzed hand.

"I've heard a lot about you, Jim," Dennison said, and he smiled. "Knight tells me you're really an American."

"That's right, but my folks came away from Cincinnati when I was four years old," Jim told him. "I've lived in England for years. But I hope I'll get back to the U. S. A. some day."

"Bring a Knight machine over and ride at Indianapolis—we'll give you a good time!" Big Kerry Dennison clapped him on the shoulder as he went on: "I'll say you look as though this race isn't worrying you—got used to speed work now, maybe! This the car?"

He gazed over the side of the cockpit, bending to peer at the glittering dials on the instrument board.

"It's a real man's job handling an outfit like this," Dennison commented. "Where does your mechanic sit?"

"He doesn't," said Jim. "Mechanics aren't carried now. Our cars have got too light and fast, and they take a bit of holding to the road, so——" He broke off, leaving unsaid that there was no need to risk the lives of two men.

Big Kerry Dennison grunted, then glanced along the line of pits.

"You'll have to meet my daughter, Peggy. She's getting keen on racing cars. There she is now, with Scott, the Hartz man!"

Jim saw her, standing near the three Hartz-Flyers. Scott was laughing and talking animatedly. The poise of the girl's slim figure told how interested she was in what he was saying.

Scott pointed to his car, and she turned her head as he tapped the tape-bound rim of his steering wheel. It was then that Jim recognized her.

She was the girl he had almost run down as he drove to the course. Sunshine caught her chiseled features, the clear rays picking her out against the shifting background of scurrying officials, and against the dimness of the packed stands.

Jim tensed as he watched Scott chatting with her, and his heart quickened a little. It was, of course, nothing to him. Scott was the sort of fellow who could fascinate any girl.

She turned, presently, and glanced in their direction. Dennison beckoned and she took a hurried leave of the Hartz speedman, to come walking quickly toward them.

"Hurry up, Peggy! They'll be turning us off the track in a little while. This is Jim Ryan—drives a Knight. And if he wins it'll be an American boy who's shown these foreigners the way, because his home town's Cincinnati!"

Her eyes lit up as she offered her hand. It was lost in Jim's taut fist.

"So you're Jim Ryan!" she exclaimed. "No wonder you didn't run me down in the lane—you're too good a driver, they say!"

"I didn't know you two had met before!" Big Kerry Dennison stared at them, then he exclaimed suddenly. "We'll talk about that later, they're turning people off the road now. Come on, Peggy!"

A corps of armed officials were hurrying along the line of pits, order-

ing the cars out and sending all but drivers and mechanics from the course.

"We're going to watch the race from Munsalle Corner!" Peggy called the words to Jim as her father drew her away. "I'll look out for you. Good luck—hope you win!"

She was gone with her father, officials bustling them away. Jim heard the metallic ring of the hood as Dan slammed it down and slapped over the straps.

"Good luck—hope you win!" Her voice seemed to sound again in Jim's ears as she turned back to smile at him.

Something made him glance along the track. Scott was standing by his car. He had figured something which had not even approached Jim's mind—the way to Big Kerry Dennison's money might lay as much through his daughter as along the racing circuits.

Scott's dark face was set, and in his hair-shrouded eyes there was a sudden, smoldering resentment and a challenge.

CHAPTER IV.

SPEED DEMONS!

OUT on the now-cleared road, racing machines were being rolled to the starting line. Jim slipped into the Knight's cockpit, and Dan was aided by half a dozen more mechanics in waking the motor to life. The gray-haired man leaped astride the rounded tail and clung there as the car shot away.

Yelling officials waved it into position, in the center of the second row of seven cars.

Soon, twenty-one machines were grouped in three lines, with the quivering thunder of their exhausts—slamming staccato, or rolling in throaty songs of power—crashing out to form a background for the quick, excitement-cracked voices of men whose part in the race was only to watch.

Everything seemed to waken. The

stands became a gray, shifting sea of craning spectators, the palisades before the inclosures creaked under the weight of crowding men, and an agitated horde of officials on the road ran wildly, with the aimless scuttling of startled hens.

Even the drooping flags stirred in a breeze which shifted the hot, morning air. Only the drivers themselves seemed undisturbed as they strolled out for a fat, important little man to read them the racing rules they already knew.

The rules were gabbled in French to the taut little group of Italian, German, French, British and American speedmen and a lone Rumanian prince who had lost his fortune and now lived by his nerve and skill.

For all the differences in their nationalities, these men were strangely alike. They were among the finest of the world's road-racing drivers, muscular with the strength needed to hold a bucking car, each with clear, very steady eyes trained to measure the split inches which stand between safety and disaster at high speed.

They joked together during the farce of reading the rules. They looked careless and perfectly at ease, except that here and there a man stood quietly apart, biting his lips and cursing the formality which delayed the start. Men like this showed the tense nerves of them all.

Jim returned to his machine, its throttled engine bellowing steadily. He revved it up for a few moments, then Dan leaned over the side.

"You come in about the twenty-sixth lap and change wheels all round," he said. "We'll be flagging you, so watch for our signals. Best o' luck, Jim—and look out for Scott!"

He pushed a hand forward, and Jim gripped his oily fist. Dan did not go immediately, he stood looking around the cockpit. He tapped the spare goggles more neatly into their net, touched home the bars of chocolate in Jim's side

pocket, then patted the side of the machine, reluctant to go.

"Best o' luck," he repeated, and shook hands nervously again. "Take—take care o' yourself Jim. Don't try that hairpin too fast, 'cause the road's goin' to break up there."

A nod, a forced smile, and he walked slowly away, turning half a dozen times to look back. Dan had been a race driver himself in the old days when cars were giants and before he lost his nerve. He knew the death-hedged zone which Jim would ride in the hours immediately to come.

Jim settled down against the squab, glanced at the air pressure and oil gauges, then adjusted his goggles and pulled his crash helmet a little more firmly on his head.

Cars were thundering all around him. In front, the exhaust of a squat, aluminum-wheeled blue Bugatti was howling madly as her driver revved up his engine.

At Jim's side, the two other Knight machines were booming strongly. An Alfa-Romeo was roaring in the row behind, its exhaust wild and angry; and to Jim's left were the Hartz-Flyers.

Scott was at the far end of the line, his engine coughing in quick bursts. Jim watched the man as he settled in his seat. Scott was buckling down the wrists of his overalls, and snapping his goggles until they sat comfortably.

The course was clear in front, clear and wide and straight to the first turn. The blazing sun drenched it, scorching down on the advertisement banners that draped the fencing on either side. Jim could feel the sun on his neck, and he shrugged his collar higher.

There was a strange, dry feeling in his mouth. He rubbed the hot, damp palms of his hands down his thighs before he dropped them anew on the tight cord which bound the rim of the big steering wheel.

Out from the side of the road, a tour-

ing car appeared, moving to the front of the standing machines. This car would set the racers off in a rolling start. A small, black figure showed farther ahead, bearing a flag.

When the flag dropped the touring machine would spurt, the lined-up cars following, until it was speeding at a mile a minute as it neared the actual starting line opposite the giant score board. Then it would streak to the side of the course, and the race would be on.

Jim saw azure smoke go out in bursts from the chattering exhausts of the cars in the row ahead.

"Nearly time now," he told himself. "I might nip past that Bugatti—got to get ahead and try to make the pace. Bet Scott's on his toes."

His thoughts came in snatches. "One of us is bound to crack. Where did she say she'd be—Munsalle Corner! Won't be much chance of seeing her—pretty fast corner that!"

Out in front, the little figure with the flag had lifted the staff. Abruptly, the fabric slashed down and the man leaped for his life toward the palisade.

Every car surged forward in that instant. There was a thunderous, bellying, smashing roar; smoke slewed on the air like something solid. The pace-making car swept away, with the rest in formation behind it.

Jim edged his Knight over until he placed the radiator ready to streak between two of the cars ahead. He saw the touring machine drawing in to the side of the road. At the back of it, a man dropped a white flag with a sudden, wild motion—and the race was on!

CHAPTER V.

HAIRPIN TURN.

JIM'S Knight leaped as he saw the flag drop, screaming to the peak of its third speed before he changed to high, sliding between the two machines in front—a Bugatti and a red Fiat.

The Bugatti's exhaust howled in his ear, note changing as he ripped in front. An Alfa-Romeo came like a red meteor into the lead from somewhere at the side. A blue Delage challenged it.

Then the Knight had passed both, rocking into its stride, drawing away from the pack, and boring into the broad, white road ahead.

Out on the left, Scott's Hartz-Flyer left the ruck, tires stamping stones and grit from the road edge in a solid spume. He drew level with Jim—pulled ahead!

"Let him go—sit on his tail!" The thoughts whipped through Jim's brain. "Get him after the corner—let him show his speed!"

The surface of the road in front became blurred before Jim's eyes, its haze scored by streaks that rushed to meet him. The towering poplars that lined it, when the stands were left behind, reared like green and flattened blobs, slipping against the sky. Little groups of spectators standing between the shapely trunks, showed as mute, immobile forms, caught in odd tensioned gestures.

A medley of color jumped abruptly across the road, formed by flaring advertisements which marked the first turn on the course. The corner leaped up with magic swiftness as Jim pulled his car behind the Hartz-Flyer's wagging tail.

Into the bend went Scott—too fast! His wheel hubs seemed to kiss the safety palisade as he flung his car into a skid that would take him round. From the threshing wheels road spume lashed, stones cracking on the radiator guard of the Knight.

Through the tearing whine of his supercharger, Jim could hear the crackling bellow of the other's exhaust—and then he was sliding round the bend, fighting his own machine, holding to the inside of the curve until the road straightened.

Beyond this turn were two miles of road, straight save for two long bends. Jim knew if he was to make the pace and snatch the lead, he had to try it now, while he had the chance.

He opened wide, foot hard down on the accelerator pedal, and the black needle of the revolution counter climbed toward the broad, red band which marked the danger limit of the motor's power.

Scott was sitting his Hartz on the crown of the road, and the Knight leaped to his tail. One glance Jim gave into his rear-view mirror. It lent him a hazy glimpse of a string of cars coming out of the bend—colored streaks in the heart of whirling dust, livid blobs of color that leaped and danced wildly.

He pulled out to pass the Hartz. He could see Scott's dark face reflected in the tiny mirror set in the stream-lined shelter of the car's scuttle. The man was glancing back, marking Jim's position. He could see the Knight drawing out to pass, but he would not give the car room.

These French roads were heavily cambered. Their outer edges were broken and rough, and here dust lay thick and grass grew raggedly. If a machine held the center, where the surface was fairly smooth and even, anything which wanted to pass must perforce run on the camber and take the road where it was broken and bad.

Jim grinned a little. He pulled his car over, edging it along the length of the Hartz, the Knight bucking madly as its tires jagged the rough road edge.

Jim could discern the nickel-rimmed dials on the Hartz-Flyer's instrument board, gleaming and winking in the sunlight. He made out the set angle of Scott's jaw as the man flashed a glance—then the cars were dead level.

Together, they rocked onward, Knight's tires waking a whirl of dust and crashing loose stones at the spectators lined between the trees. Ex-

hausts blared defiant, raucous challenges; motors roared in a wild speed song as, wheel to wheel, they thundered on.

Scott gave his machine all it would take, both men checking with iron wrists the snatching of the machines as they dueled in a mad riot of fierce sound.

For nearly half a mile they held together, then, as the first long bend showed up, the Knight went ahead. The crash of her exhaust became a triumphant bellow as she picked stones off the road and snapped them back before she drew away—away—into the lead!

Weeks of toil were built into that tearing burst of speed, weeks of eager labor by oil-grimed men. They'd built and they'd tuned the Knight to snatch the lead at the outset of the race and hold that lead until she cracked—but they hoped she wouldn't crack.

Jim and the rest hoped that the rocketing car would stand the frightful stress of riding to her limit. And if the stout-hearted motor died under the fierce strain, they hoped that the pace she set would break up those engines which tried to hold her speed.

Another long bend, and then came fast Munsalle Corner. It whipped at Jim in a vision of a yellow safety sand bank, raw wooden palisades, wire-hitched palings and solid rows of spectators.

He went through the turn in a burst of streaking dust, rocking on with the wind's hollow howl in his ears, and the back of his head jarring against the padded fairing behind.

On—the car finding yet more speed in every turn of her threshing wheels. On—hot, oil-fumed air sweeping past the footgrid and searing his nostrils. On—round palisaded curves and tree-shrouded straights, through treacherous S-bends to thunder at Rompu hair-pin bend.

And all down the course pistol-armed *agents de police*, clad in black and sil-

ver, heralded the coming of the Knight. They blew squeaky, penetrating little trumpets, shrilled on whistles, or sounded brassy bugles that their comrades on the corners might hustle spectators to safety from those parts of the palisades into which a hurtling car might crash—oversteered or skidding.

At the Rompu hairpin, Jim changed down with a triumphant note of the exhaust. He slowed with brakes squealing, skidding madly halfway into the bend—skidding again to bring the machine into the grand stand straightaway, then rocking on to where the packed tribunes showed, the crowd standing and straining to see who would lead on this first, mad lap.

Past the black line of pits Jim went, the cheer of the volatile crowd lost in the crashing roar of his car. In the polished glass of his rear-view mirror he could see Scott coming up behind, with a Fiat like a red streak at his tail—all blurred by smoke and dust.

"One lap and—by glory!—I'm leading!" Jim muttered.

CHAPTER VI.

AT MUNSALLE CORNER.

IT was not until he was on his fifth lap that Jim saw Peggy Dennison at the Munsalle Corner. She was standing at the far end of the sand bank, on the outside of the turn. He knew her only by the color of her dress.

He saw her again the next time round, and by concentrating on that point, managed to make out her features and be certain that it was she. He thought she waved her hand.

The race was settling down, now. Cars were stringing out along the course. Two hundred yards behind the Knight, Scott jockeyed his Hartz-Flyer, holding the pace that Jim set. Back of the Hartz, a Fiat and a blue Bugatti were fighting for third place.

Jim's second lap of the seven-mile

circuit was covered at eighty-one miles an hour, and after that he lapped consistently at a shade over eighty-two. That meant lifting the speedometer needle until the quivering black streak was nudging at a hundred and fifteen miles an hour along the straights, and the thudding wheels were touching only the high spots of the road.

On his eighth lap when Scott came to challenge the Knight's lead, Jim broke the speed record for the Givors circuit, and on the ninth—

It was at Rompu hairpin. Already Jim had lapped cars which were slower, or which had been delayed, and now out of the speed-born murk ahead he picked the flat-tailed shape of a roaring blue Aries. He saw the French driver haul his machine off the crown of the road to give him the corner.

Jim roared past him, saw that he was going too fast into the turn, changed down and braked with foot and hand. He felt the car kicking on the road, slashing full across the heart of the hairpin bend. Sand spumed from the low safety sand bank built there, as his off wheels found it; then he was clear, skidding wildly as he dragged the car round.

He could hear the tires whining and whistling on the road—there came a mad, menacing lurch—the machine slewed affrightingly yet again. As he hauled it straight he saw the off front tire flapping in a black tangle of burned rubber and shredded canvas.

The skid had burst the tire, and the blue Aries screamed past him as he straightened and sent the Knight surging slowly forward, to where the pits showed like a black streak half a mile ahead of him.

Jim heard the following Hartz-Flyer go past, and triumph showed in every lurch of the hurtling machine, as it flung ahead to snatch advantage from every second that Jim must be delayed in changing his lamed wheel.

At the Knight pit Dan was standing, wheel jack ready. He had it under the axle almost before the machine stopped. Jim shot from the cockpit to grab a spare and the copper-headed hammer for the hub cup.

"Hard luck!" the mechanic yelled, as they worked together. "You've got 'em all beat. Scott was second—Fiat third—Bugatti fourth!" The hub cap spun under Jim's fingers, then the lamed wheel was yanked away, and both men clawed at the tattered remnants of the burst tire.

The new wheel was rammed home, as the mechanic yelled: "You touched eighty-three last lap—gained two seconds on Scott! You'll catch 'em again and—— Right!"

He leaped at the jack handle as Jim hammered the hub cap tight and slung the tool at the pit, then dived into the cockpit. He caught a glimpse of Bill Knight leaning over the plank, stop watch in hand.

"Fifty-three seconds!" Jim heard him yell, then the jack was jerked away and he sent the car roaring on.

Fifty-three seconds lost through changing a wheel—Scott must have gained much more than a mile on him. If the Hartz-Flyer held its speed, the race would be more than half run before Jim could catch his rival again, unless he rode at the limit all the way. He decided to give her all she'd take.

Soon the narrow cockpit was an inferno of burning heat. Jim's face was grimed from dust and oil fumes. At the backs of his bandaged knees he could feel the lack of strength which is the first effect of a racing car's hammering.

Each time he passed his pit, they signaled the number of seconds he had gained on Scott. It averaged two seconds every lap. At the twenty-sixth lap—half distance—they flagged him in for fuel. He saw that the Hartz was also at its pit.

"Scott's in—changing all round!" Dan yelled as he jumped at the radiator cap. "You'll pick him up here, Jim!"

Like madmen they worked on the car, filling up, before they tackled the wheels. In practice pit work, they had timed their fastest effort at three and a half minutes; they broke that record by forty seconds. The Knight car—newly shod and replenished—stormed from the pit just as Scott got away.

"Got you!" Jim gasped the words as he roared at the other's tail. If he could pass Scott now, he would regain the lead. Scott held him to the first corner, and he led him through the bends. It was as they rocked down to Munsalle Corner that Jim pulled out and began to creep up.

Flame was streaking from the Hartz's exhaust, spouting in a livid streak. Scott again sat the road and wouldn't give room. They were dead level as they tore down to Munsalle.

"If he skids—I'll pass him! He'll lose time! Wonder if the girl's still there? Make Scott mad if I give him my dust in front of her!"

Scott didn't slow for the corner. He took it at speed, and Jim took it with him. Into the bend they went, tails wagging, rear wheels tearing the road—wheel hubs spinning bare inches apart—round—round——

Jim saw the Hartz jump—leap at him—skid! Scott was inside the curve. The turn was bare inches too sharp for him. He couldn't hold the road.

Jim pulled out—it was either that, or lock wheels with Scott and crash together. And the moment that he eased the wheel, the Knight slithered madly into a skid.

The palisades slewed round him—whirling wildly as the Knight slashed broadside to the road. He glimpsed the Hartz with off wheels plowing into the sand bank, Scott fighting to pull the machine straight.

With all his strength, Jim dragged on the wheel. He felt the tail come round—and then his steering wheel spun loosely under his hand.

His steering had gone—and instinctively he knew why. Hitting the bank at the Rompu hairpin on the ninth lap had strained something—whatever had been wrenched had now given under the awful stress of this last skid.

The smoothed end of the sand bank showed before him. He saw men running wildly—leaping from his path.

And he saw Peggy Dennison—where the banking ended—straight before him!

She was standing there—white—not moving.

He had the veriest fraction of time in which to think. Dive into the cockpit under the steering column and save himself when the machine piled up? Or——

He took the alternative. Both hands wrapped on the wheel. With all the strength of his body piled into his arms, he hauled it over, striving to drag the machine back to the road and away from the girl.

The one front wheel which he could now control turned and he felt the car answer, canting as it slithered to miss her.

One glimpse Jim had of sunlit sky—red roofs—trees and running men. His ears were filled by an appalling, rending roar. There was a tremendous shock—dust and smoke veiled the whirling vision—and the world seemed to end for him in a final, shattering crash that brought darkness and oblivion.

CHAPTER VII.

FLAMING WRECKAGE.

PEGGY DENNISON, held immobile by some dreadful force stronger than her will, saw the Knight slam to its side as the near wheel collapsed. The rest was hidden for her by a mighty

cloud of dust, in the heart of which the machine was a leaping, hurtling terror—a pounding, vengeful thing of mangled wheels, torn tires, and shattered steelwork.

It seemed to spin in mad circles across the road, finally checking at the end of a long, skittering slide.

She was conscious that something else was happening near her, that the Hartz-Flyer was also out of control, hammering itself to disaster—but all her attention was riveted on the Knight.

She began to run toward it, at last, without knowing what she did, her shoes kicking against the ruts which the car had scored in the road. She automatically missed the *débris* which was scattered over the road's sun-drenched surface.

She was first to reach the shattered machine. It lay on its side at the edge of the course, gray smoke lifting in a funereal pall. The smoke half choked her as she bent to the cockpit.

The narrow opening was a tangled mass of wreckage, earth and oil smothering the broken steering wheel and griming the still, crumpled figure jammed beneath it.

Peggy Dennison caught at Jim's shoulder. She could see his face, with a crimson splotch down one side. Then beyond him and amongst the pedals, she saw a tiny, venomous lick of flame—a blazing tongue that spread and grew with incredible rapidity.

She pulled on Jim's shoulder, but she could not move him. He was trapped in his seat by the broken steering column and the smashed remnants of the instrument board.

Desperately, she wrenched at the rim of the steering wheel. The riven edges of a broken steel spoke grated harshly, but that was all. The wheel seemed immovable, with the lower part driven hard against Jim's side, ramming him into his oil-splashed seat.

In quick-passing seconds which

seemed to be an age, she saw the lurid tongue of flame down by the footgrid as it licked upward, playing about the canvas of his racing shoe, where his foot was bent between clutch and accelerator pedals. A breath of wind volleyed the lofting smoke, choking her and all but hiding the crumpled figure in the shattered cockpit.

The flame seemed to spring like a blazing heart out of the smoke. She felt the heat of it on her hands—felt it beating her back; the acrid smoke clutched at her throat, and everything blurred from the burning tears it waked to mist her eyes.

Then—from nowhere, it seemed—came the smoke-screened figure of a French soldier. Peggy heard him yell madly. He seemed to dive headforemost from the other side of the cockpit. She glimpsed something that shone a fiery red in his hands. From a brazen nozzle there spouted a hissing stream of fire-extinguishing chemicals.

The fluttering sheet of flame was blotted out as though it had never been. The searing reek of chemical rose like something solid from the cockpit, and once again she caught at Jim's shoulder.

A hand came on her arm; it was a second *poilu*, and she felt herself thrust aside. A bayonet flashed in a glittering arc and then a rifle butt crashed at the broken steering wheel.

Peggy could hear the man gasping and panting as he strove to free the penned speedman. Then the wheel seemed to dissolve in a shower of shattered rim and flying cord.

A terrific blow from the metal-shod butt rammed broken bodywork clear of the lax figure. Then the Frenchman dropped his weapon and dived into the smoke to lift Jim out.

Peggy jumped to aid him, and she had Jim's head and shoulders in her arms as a score of shouting men appeared, surging like one to the side of

the road as a screaming Alfa-Romeo streaked round the Munsalle Corner, showering them with dust and stones.

Peggy and the two blue-clad soldiers dragged Jim clear. Together they ran round the battered tail of the machine, and she half fell as they set their burden gently on the grassy bank that bordered the road.

As she recovered, she got a swift vision of Scott's car. It was just clear of the curve, and men were lifting Scott out, while soldiers dragged the smashed Hartz-Flyer clear of the course.

Scott's goggles had been torn away; he looked ghastly white and blood showed on his face—livid against the oil-smirched white of his overalls.

She found that she had Jim's head pillowed on her lap. His face was all grimed from oil, and there was a dust film on his gritted teeth. Little cuts showed on his cheeks where they had been snagged by flying flints from the road, hurled by some car before he passed it.

Around his eyes was a white patch, where his goggles had been, with dust and oil showing in a ridge against the outer edge.

Peggy became aware that the two soldiers were now pushing back the pallid-faced crowd that had gathered, and two gray-haired men were running wise hands down Jim's limbs. They must be doctors, but they paid no heed to her as they vented quick exclamations in French.

"This any good, miss?" A silver flask was thrust before her by a shaking hand. An Englishman dropped to his knees at her side. She saw that his features were drained of all their color, while his gray eyes seemed to have been sunk into his head from shock of what he had seen.

"He's a hero!" the man gasped, as, mechanically, he struggled with the stopper of the brandy flask. "His

steering gear went at one side—drag link snapped, I think.

"He could steer on one wheel an' he almost stood up to try an' drag the car round, so's it wouldn't hit a girl that was standing by the end of the sand bank.

"He could have saved himself if he'd ducked into the cockpit and let the car go. He must be smashed to pieces—poor beggar!"

One of the doctors snatched the flask from the man's hand as it was uncorked, then gestured violently to Peggy to lift Jim's head. She watched the doctor trying to pry open the gritted teeth. He seemed unable to do it.

Numbly, Peggy Dennison felt that Jim was dead, and she closed her eyes at the thought. She got a clear-cut memory picture of what he had looked like in the instant before the crash.

She knew that pale Englishman had referred to herself when he spoke of the girl by the safety sand bank, although he had not recognized her.

Jim had been out of his seat, straining over the wheel, his light-gray eyes glowing behind the lenses of his goggles as he saw her. One hand—she could picture it vividly—had been like a bronze clamp on the steering wheel, and his face had been all twisted in the tearing fury of his effort to force the car away from her.

And now— The silver flask lay on the lank grass, and they were swamping his face with water. She compared him with the boy she had met in the lane that morning—all suntanned and lithe and strong.

There had been something oddly vital about him—something that had made her heart leap. Now it leaped again as, in a sudden flash of realization, she knew that she wanted Jim; she wanted to hear his voice, to see his smile, to know *why* he had caught at her heart.

"Don't—don't let him die! Don't!" The words forced themselves from her

pallid lips before she knew what she was saying.

"It's all right, miss—don't get scared!" It was the Englishman talking from somewhere near.

"There's nothing broken, the doctors say. There's no head wound, either. He must have been flung back in the cockpit and caught there. I don't think he's anything worse than stunned. And Scott of the Hartz-Flyer is all right. Look!"

He was pointing along the road, and through the crowd she could see Scott on his feet. He seemed to be walking in a circle, staggering in his stride, although men supported him on either side. His dark eyes were dazed and glared wildly.

She felt a movement against her hands. Jim had rolled his head a little in her lap; his eyelids flickered—tightened—then opened suddenly. She heard the crowd around begin to clap, venting their relief. Then she was helping Jim to sit up.

CHAPTER VIII.

VICIOUS ANGER.

DID—" Jim's voice sounded thinly as he gazed shakily at the ring of faces. "Did—I—miss her? She was—was—"

He tried to get up. The two doctors bent forward, and essayed to force him down, but Jim came to his knees and a moment after he was standing, Peggy's arms helping to hold him up.

"Did I miss her?" His voice was stronger now, as he blinked at the doctors, but she could feel his whole body quivering. Some one came to her side to help support him.

"You're all right—nobody hurt!" The man with the flask caught his arm. "You pulled the car clear, Ryan. Better sit down, man; your nerves are all shot to rags."

"Jim—I'm here!" Peggy bent to

look into his crimson-streaked face, and it seemed natural to her to use his christian name. "The car didn't touch me!"

He tried to smile a little. "Scott—Scott skidded into me," he murmured. "Sorry, if I scared you, and——" He checked, then stiffened as he added: "Where's the car! Got to—go on!"

The quivering and trembling of his shocked nerves ceased under a new tension and he moved forward. "How long have I been knocked out?"

The crowd parted before him, as a Delage smashed past in a welter of roaring sound, slamming road spume and stones to the shattered bulk of the Knight.

Jim stopped, swaying on his feet, as he saw the wrecked machine. When Peggy would have steadied him, he pushed her hand aside. He was still staring dazedly at the car, when the crowd, melting a little, parted, and Scott tumbled toward him. Jim turned as he sighted him, and his eyes narrowed.

Scott's overalls were torn and stained, and his face was dead white. One sleeve hung in a tatter of linen, but the muscles on the bared forearm stood out like cords. The grimy fist was bunched.

"What kind of a driver d'you call yourself, Ryan!" His voice was harsh and vibrant, his eyes blazed furiously.

"You skidded into me!" Peggy hardly recognized the husky tone that came from Jim's lips.

"You crowded me on the bend!" snarled Scott. "Didn't give me room. It was my corner, darn you!"

"You took it too fast—couldn't hold the road! You knew I'd got the speed of you, an' you wouldn't let me pass!"

Jim was bent as he spoke and Scott lurched nearer him. They stood glaring at one another, each consumed by an intense anger which lent him strength. The labor of weeks had gone for naught

in the wreck, and each blamed the other for the pile-up.

Both knew that the hopes of their racing camps were vanishing with the smoke which wafted from the shattered cars.

Their racing kit in tatters, both wan of face and quivering from the shock of the smash, they faced while the watching Frenchmen regarded them blankly.

Peggy watched raw anger rising. She saw Jim holding himself in. She saw Scott's bunched fists quivering, and his lips twisting on his gritted teeth as his temper surged.

"You thought you could run me into the palings!" he rasped. "You meant to smash me! You—you——" His fist whipped up and swung with impulsive viciousness.

The impact of his knuckles against Jim's jaw was drowned by the howling bellow of two cars as they ripped out of the Munsalle Corner. Peggy saw Jim's knees buckle under him, and then he slumped to the grass.

With a gasp, she jumped toward him, but he was staggering to his feet before she reached him. She saw Scott, all tensed and grim, ready to hit again, but he checked as a thin smile curved the corners of Jim's lips.





"I'll make you—sorry for that!" he said slowly, and now his voice was amazingly steady.

Peggy, a hand on his arm, could feel the muscles beneath his sleeve corded, hard as iron. He tensed to jump his man, but the Englishman with the flask leaped between them, urging Scott away.

"Steady on!" she heard the man exclaim. "Don't make a scene in front of all these French people. You're both all worked up." He started to draw Scott away. "Come along with me—can't have a row here——"

Peggy felt Jim's arm go limp, like a taut rope that has suddenly been

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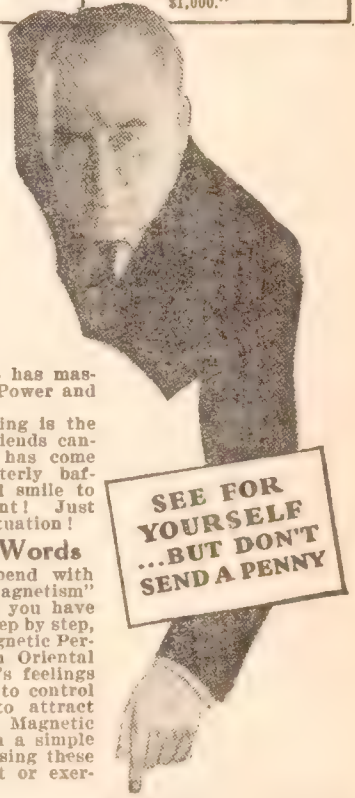
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loosened. A little, whistling sigh sounded from his lips, his eyelids drooped, and she caught him as he slumped to the grass.

CHAPTER IX.

DEVASTATION AND DETERMINATION

IT was a minute or so before Peggy and one of the helmeted soldiers could get Jim to his feet.

"I'm all right," he murmured. "Just gone a bit groggy. Want to—to get away somewhere—quiet!"

The two doctors came to him and protested vehemently in French, but Peggy did not understand what they said. She motioned to the soldier. The man helped to support Jim out through the crowd to where a tree, with heavy bushes at its base, threw a shady patch on a stretch of grass.

They sat him down with his back to the tree trunk. Then the soldier used his rifle to disperse the gaping crowd.

In a little while, the spectators lost interest in the bent figure and the girl kneeling beside him, and turned again to the examination of the two wrecked cars, and the small score board mounted on the inside of the Munsalle Corner.

The frightful, jarring shock of a smash can completely wreck the nerve of a speedman who is physically unhurt. Jim's Knight, and Scott's Hartz-Flyer had rocketed into the Munsalle Corner at somewhere around a hundred miles an hour. Scott's off wheels had plowed the safety sand bank at the end of his skid, and that had slowed him enormously before his car turned over.

Jim, in the moment that his Knight slid outward, had stepped instinctively on the brake pedal, to throw the machine into a counter skid that would wrench it straight again.

His foot had been hard down from the moment he knew his steering had gone until the stupendous crash that had hurled him into oblivion.

The position of his pedal-trapped foot had jerked him into the cockpit, instead of allowing him to be flung out when the car had heeled. The steering wheel, smashing as the car rolled over before it slid on its side, had pinned him down.

The very fact that his inert body had been clutched in the narrow maw of the cockpit had saved him from injury. In the awful seconds that the machine had hurtled devastatingly to a stop, he had been held as tightly as a part of the racing car itself—held safely in the heart of the machine, while wheels were torn from their stub-axes and wrist-thick steel was bent as though it had been lead.

No man could go through that and not be affected. Jim crouched, now, with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. His whole body was weak, and his stomach seemed an empty void as he fought against the waves of nausea that strove to grip him.

He could hear cars smashing past on the road, could feel the vibrant thud of their blaring exhausts thrumming in his chest as they went, but it was the ringing clatter of road spume on hollow steel which finally roused him—the sound of small stones slammed by threshing tires to the huddled bulk of his wrecked Knight.

He looked up at last. The car was less than a dozen yards from him. On the road *agents de police*, soldiers, and officials were hurriedly snatching from the course bits of rubber and metal débris which the two machines had scattered wide.

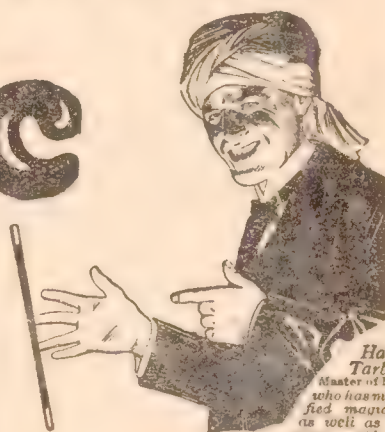
"Are you better now?"

He started as he heard Peggy's voice, and he turned from the car.

"Yes, thanks. I forgot you were here! Gosh, but I must have given you a scare on the corner—thought I'd hit you! You must have jumped for it!"

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"I didn't," she told him. "I just stopped there. There wasn't time to do anything, because it was all over in a flash. A man said that your steering had gone, or something."

Jim nodded, but he did not answer. He turned his gaze again to the wrecked car, then glanced at the distant score board. Before the race, he had taken the trouble to learn by heart the numbers of the competing cars.

He could see now that a Fiat led, with a Bugatti and an Alfa-Romeo close on its tail. Neither of the remaining machines in either the Knight or the Hartz-Flyer teams was within a lap of the leaders.

Jim was amazed to find that there was just a dozen circuits to go—and he had crashed on his twenty-seventh lap! It meant that over an hour had now passed since the pile-up.

"It's terribly bad luck for you," the girl said quietly. "You could have passed the Hartz, and you'd have been well in the lead by now. Father was with me until a little while before, and then he went off to the big stands to watch from there; the timing is better than on this little score board."

She added: "I was hoping you'd beat the Hartz."

Peggy wanted to keep him talking. Underneath his tan, his face was patched with white. His hands plucked incessantly at a fold of his overalls, and every few moments he dabbed automatically at the cut beside one eye.

She thought talking would steady him and, when he did not answer, she repeated:

"I was hoping you'd beat the Hartz!"

"So was I"—and he smiled grimly. "It meant a lot to us. Still, neither team can get among the leaders now." He nodded toward his car. "There's four thousand pounds—twenty thousand dollars—worth of stuff in that ditch. Doesn't look much like it now, does it?"

"Twenty thousand dollars!" Peggy stared at him. "I didn't know a racing machine cost as much as that!"

"No? That car's handmade right through—took months to build and test. She's got about the best we could put into her—the best in metal and work."

"Bill Knight sold his house and took a flat, just to raise the money for the team—maybe you won't understand what that means?"

He glanced at her. Then he went on:

"I've lived so long in England that I have the English viewpoint in some things. I know what old Bill sacrificed. You see, Englishmen don't take kindly to living in flats, and Bill had one of those old Georgian houses—solid and big, with three or four acres of garden round it."

"I know!" Peggy exclaimed suddenly. "Crazy stone paths and lawns and banks of flowers. Green hedges and—— Oh, I know what old English gardens are like. It must have been a wrench to part with it."

Her last words were almost lost in the furious blare of the leading Fiat as it came around the corner, a red and sliding streak that screamed as it stormed on its victorious way.

"It was a wrench, all right," Jim agreed. "We were counting on my finishing up somewhere near the winner's flag with this machine. Now she's scrap iron, and our other two don't stand a chance of winning. Pretty hard on Bill, that!"

He stared at the car. Presently, he went on:

"You see, we haven't got much money, that's why I was keen to win. We've already been up, against the Hartz-Flyers, and there were reasons why I wanted to put it across Scott. Still, neither of us can do anything in this particular race, so it breaks pretty even."

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Peggy nodded slowly.

"I know that dad has decided to put money either into your firm or else into the Hartz-Flyer," she said. "But I don't know much about his affairs. He seldom talks business to me, but if I could persuade him to help you, I——"

"I'm not asking that! Don't think it!" Jim turned to her quickly. "I'm content if it's just a straight scrap between me and Scott. I never liked him anyway! And, by glory, if I can't win next time we're in the same race, I'll give him a darned good run for it before he licks me!"

His eyes lit up, and he stared straight out to the tire-scarred road before him.

"We've got a team entered for the Grand Prix d'Europe on the Monza Speedway at Milan. I'll persuade Bill Knight to build me another car for it—and we'll do it, if we have to work night

and day. I know ways I can get more speed!

"The bus I've just smashed was good enough to whip anything in this race, but the new one we'll build will show its tail to the fastest machine anybody can bring to Monza—if I can hold her to the track!

"That'll be the trouble, she might turn out too light. But if it's just between me and Scott, then I'll win or I'll——"

He nodded expressively to the wreck at the roadside. There was a vibrant thrill in Jim's voice, and his lean jaw was squared, so that little muscles stood out at the sides.

The second installment of this stirring serial of automobile speedways will appear in the next issue of TOP-NOTCH MAGAZINE, on the news stands April 1st.



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Slash through the shadowed silence, then are still;
While somewhere in the gloom deep in the wood
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A TALK WITH YOU

News and Views by the
Editor and Readers

MARCH 15, 1929

Glance below at the announcement of the contents of our next issue. You'll find it's going to be a knock-out! Better tell your news dealer to put aside a copy for you—or maybe you won't get one.

SCAREHEADS screamed on the front pages of all newspapers that morning. "GANG LEADER KILLED" was one big headline. "CROOKS USE AIRPLANES" said another. The news appeared in every paper in the metropolis.

A gray-haired, well-dressed gentleman sat in a subway train, peered through expensive eyeglasses at his tabloid paper. Beside him, tracing the words with a calloused finger, a workman read the same news in the most conservative of the newspapers.

Bulking hugely in his brass-buttoned, blue "harness," a cop read the write-up, swaying to the motion of the train. A pert, red-lipped stenographer, demure and poised, turned to "Page 4" for the rest of the reporter's account of what had happened.

At dinner tables, in restaurants, in tea rooms and at soda fountains, the news was read, discussed. The public became aware of gangsters and racketeers, people of the underworld. The upheaval which resulted interested thousands, all over the country.

A SHORT time later, a long crook story was submitted to this magazine. Its title, "Sky Gangsters," was interesting and unusual. Dramatized and presented in swinging, arresting words, were some of the events that had appeared in newspapers all over the country.

Here was a story of to-day, a yarn of the moment, fresh, original, alive. It

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On the news stands April 1st

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SKY GANGSTERS

by **Glenn Garrison**

A thrilling story of big-city gangs to-day

A Long Novelette

UNDER THE BLACK EAGLE

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Secret-service spies in action behind the enemy lines

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by **Vic Whitman**

Jimmy Daly, Nomad, impulsively leaps into trouble

A DOG'S LIFE

by **Seaburn Brown**

A mutt mixes up in a baseball game, with comical results

HEAVY HANGS OVER

by **Walter A. Sinclair**

A story of the movie game, and how stars are made by a clever publicity man

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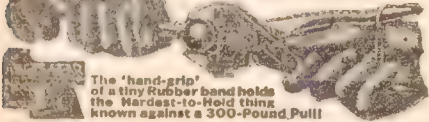
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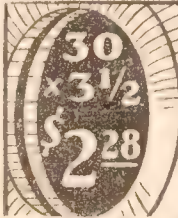
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30x5	3.65	1.75
33x5	3.65	1.75
29x4.40	2.35	1.10
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began with the pep and gusto that a real writer puts into his work. It developed logically. There was the crisp clearness of reality about it.

When dealing with the air action, the author gave us the real thrill of riding a throbbing plane as it drove through the clouds. We learned that he was an aviator, with many hours of flying to his credit. When the story dealt with gangsters and their enemies, the sense of looking at, and listening to, real gangsters was strong. The author has met and talked with many members of "the mob."

Best of all, "Sky Gangsters" proved to be a real story, a tale of unexpected happenings and surprising events. We were carried along by its action, fascinated by its unfolding situations, pleased and thrilled and gripped. You'll find this long story complete in our next issue.

ANOTHER story about Jimmy Daly, Nomad, by Vic Whitman, will be featured in our next number. You've made Jimmy's acquaintance in this is-

sue. Daly is a fellow so many of us would like to be—tied down to no one place, foot-loose, nonchalant, carefree. He's the kind who lives life as it comes along, and finds the world a mighty interesting one. "Daly Takes A Chance" is the title, and Jimmy is selling hot dogs, at the beginning of the yarn. He gets into trouble before it ends.

During the World War, spies went about their dangerous work secretly, knowing the price they'd pay if discovered. "Under the Black Eagle," by Lieutenant S. G. Pond, is about an American aviator who is sent upon an important mission behind the enemy lines.

Seaburn Brown, whose humorous baseball stories have made dyspeptics burst into roars of laughter, will contribute "A Dog's Life." This particular dog is no particular breed. He's just a miscellaneous mutt, but he sure tangles up the ball game!

There'll be other good stories by other good writers in our next number. In the meanwhile, here's a ballot for you to fill out. We'd like to hear from you.

VOTE HERE

Editors, Top-Notch,
79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.
Gentlemen:

Here's my vote on the stories in this issue of Top-Notch. I'm writing a "1" opposite the best story, a "2" opposite the next best, a "3" opposite the third best, and so on.

- ☐ Beyond Mandalay, by George E. Powers
- ☐ Film That Laugh, by Walter A. Sinclair
- ☐ Daly Crashes the Gate, by Vic Whitman
- ☐ English on the Ball, by Seaburn Brown
- ☐ The Smear, by John Beames
- ☐ Brains, by T. T. Flynn
- ☐ American Adventurers—Frank Luke, Jr., United States
air service, by Boyd Taylor
- ☐ Law of the Hills, by Otwell Binns
- ☐ Speedman's Luck, by Barry Lyndon

Let's have more stories by my favorite authors. My favorite authors are:

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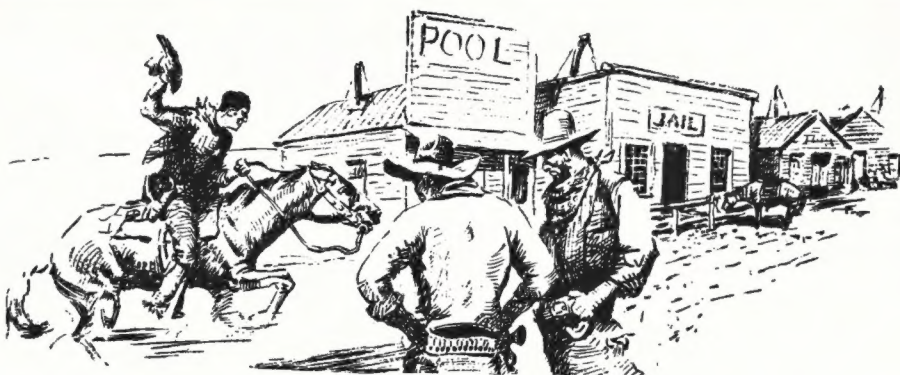
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